

Pluck and Luck

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 42.

NEW YORK, MARCH 22, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

RORY OF THE HILLS; OR

THE OUTLAWS OF TIPPERARY.

BY CORPORAL MORGAN RATTLER.



Rory stooped down suddenly, seized the end of the staff with the pike on it, and was facing his foes with a dangerous though unequal weapon, before they could thrust at him.

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CHAPTER I.

THE OUTLAWS IN COUNCIL—RORY OF THE HILLS—A DARING PROJECT—THE COMING Foe—YOUNG RORY AND HIS MOTHER—THE AMBUSCADE ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE.

It was midnight, dark and dreary, on one of the grandest mountains in Ireland, when five men assembled before a cottage that was built under an overhanging rock.

One glance at the stalwart forms, and at their blackened faces, would tell you that they were not out that wild night on any friendly errand; and a careful scrutiny of their faces would indicate that the men before you were able and willing to perform the most desperate deeds of daring and valor.

"Captain," said one of the outlaws, who held a gun in one hand and a lantern in the other, "they're on our track, for sure. We'll have to cut sticks again, if we let them find this hiding place of ours."

The person thus addressed as "captain," was a tall, powerful-looking man, with dark hair, and a full-flowing beard of the same color, whose stern expression of countenance, together with the flashing of his brilliant eyes, told of a spirit that no amount of toil or danger could subdue.

"They mustn't find it, Tade," replied the leader, placing his gun against the house; "but don't talk so loud, or she'll hear us inside. The boy will hear us. I say, boys, are you ready and willing for a stroke of good work to-night?"

"To be sure we are, brave Rory," responded an oldish-looking outlaw, who held a gun over his shoulder, as he shook his clenched hand at the leader. "By the great powers, but I was thinking you were going to give up the good work entirely. Sure, 'tis a good week since we had a crack at all at the divils below."

At that moment a female form issued from the side of the cottage, and stole behind the man who held the lantern.

"I was going to tell you, boys," resumed the leader, who was no other than the bold outlaw, or rapparee, known as Rory of the Hills—"I was going to say to you that there's brave work between this and morning, if you think that five of us are able for a dozen dragoons. We haven't the time to summon the lads from over the hills."

"A dozen dragoons, ye say, Rory, and on a dark night like this," grunted the old outlaw, who was known as Con Jackson, or Bitter Con, from the fact that he was an inveterate hater of the tyrants of the land, and because he was eternally pouring curses on them, when he was not engaged in sending leaden bullets. "Only a dozen, ye say. Give us a chance at them, and ye'll see how soon we'll lay them low."

"Give us a chance at them, captain, and we'll not fail you," said a tall, stout man, with an open, manly face, whose hands rested on the

barrel of his gun, as he looked at the chief with eager eyes. "Give us a chance at the dogs."

"Yes, give us a whack at the divils," remarked a determined-looking fellow, who stood with folded arms, watching the leader. "I can't get enough play at the villains, when I think of what I have suffered at the hands of the likes of them."

"We've all suffered, Mark Mullins," returned Rory of the Hills. "We've all wrongs to avenge, my man. If we have luck to-night, I'm thinking we'll lay one low who deserves no mercy at our hands. Who do you think I mean?"

"Lord Crawford, captain," replied old Bitter Con, as he raised his clenched hand again. "Is it him, ye mane, Rory?"

"'Tis him I mean, Con," replied Rory, as he smiled at the old fellow's earnestness. "He starts out from Cashel to-night, on his way to Cork, with an escort of only a dozen dragoons."

"Oh, be the great powers!" cried old Bitter Con, "but that's a great chance entirely. Lord Crawford, the culd villain of the world, passing along be the Glen of the Rocks. Sure, captain, agra, we'll just lie stretched behind the rocks, and riddle the coach with bullets. Oh, Heaven be praised, but it's a fine chance intirely, boys!"

"That it is, captain," said the tall, stout man, who was leaning on the barrel of the gun. "Let us at the ould scoundrel, Rory."

"Ay—ay!" said the determined-looking fellow, who stood with folded arms, and whose name was Mark Mullins. "Let us down on the ould, merciless tyrant! Oh, but how my blood boils when I think of the night the poor father was hung to the tree in front of the door, and the house burning before him, and all be the orders of that infernal ould villain, Lord Crawford! We mustn't show him any mercy, boys. No mercy for the ould tyrant!"

"That's the talk, boys," said old Bitter Con, as he clenched his hand once more. "I'll hould a golden guinea I'll hit him in the heart at the first crack. Sure he rides with a lamp in the coach. He'll be a fine mark for us, boys. We'll riddle the coach with bullets."

"We mustn't fire on the coach at all, boys," said Rory of the Hills.

"What's that ye say, captain?" inquired old Bitter Con. "Not fire on the ould villain? Sure, ye're not a-going to have any pity on him?"

"I'll not have much pity on him, you may be bound, Con," replied the daring outlaw chief; "but I have some pity on somebody else."

"And who's that, captain!" again inquired Bitter Con. "Bedad, but 'tis little pity or justice was ever shown to us at all."

"We must shoot the horses under the coach, boys," resumed Rory of the Hills, in quiet yet determined tones. "We must beat off the

dragoons in fair fight, and we must take Lord Crawford and his young daughter prisoner. On your lives, don't touch a hair of the girl's head."

"His daughter!" grumbled Bitter Con. "Be Heavens alive, man, 'twas little pity they had on my poor colleen, when she was dying of cold and hunger."

"Hush, boys—hush!" said the man holding the lantern, as he flashed the light down the steep mountain side. "May I never shoot a redcoat again, if I don't catch the gleam of bayonets down be the Glen of the Rocks."

"Out with the lantern!" cried Rory of the Hills, as he seized his gun. "The bloodhounds are out on our track. By the soul of my father, but they mustn't get up here to-night! Make ready, boys, for work in earnest."

"Oh, Heaven bless you, good Rory!" cried a female voice, as a woman appeared before him from behind the man who held the lantern. "Be yourself to-night, brave Rory. Fight your enemies to the bitter end; but don't let anything tempt you to harm an innocent girl. Don't let Con Jackson, here, touch a hair of her head, dear husband."

"Never fear, Mary," replied the outlaw chief, embracing his wife. "'Twill never be said that Rory of the Hills disgraced himself or old Ireland by killing or hurting women, even though 'tis the daughter of the man who made us what we are. Is young Rory sound asleep, darling?"

"Faith, but I'm not, father," answered an active, tall young fellow, as he stepped out from the cabin with a gun in his hand. "I'm not going to let you have all the fun to yourselves to-night."

"Go in back, my son," said the mother, as she endeavored to push the young fellow into the cottage. "Oh, what would I do if anything happened you, Rory?"

"And what can happen me, mother, more than to father, here? I'd be a nice son, indeed, to leave him do all the fighting—to desert him in the hour of danger, mother. No, indeed. Can't I go with you, father?"

"Come on, son," said the outlaw chief, as he regarded his son with a look of pride. "Don't fear for him, Mary, avourneen, and don't fear for me, either. The bullet is not cast that will kill either of us, you may swear."

"You are all I have in the world now, dears," said the fond mother, as she embraced her son with tears in her eyes.

"Begorra," cried Tade Tully, the man who held the lantern, "but we'd better be moving, if we want to have a crack at 'em below from behind the rocks, for I can see them crawling along be the foot of the first hill. There's more than nine or ten of them—the blackguards of the world!"

"You've got the eye of an owl, Tade," said the leader, as he grabbed his gun. "Good-night, wife, and keep your heart up. The boy will give a good account of himself."

"That I will, father," responded the youth, as he commenced the march down the mountain.

"Remember, wife," cried the outlaw chief, as he turned to the cottage, "that you're the wife of a hunter. On your life, if the bloodhounds should come here, don't betray the secret of the cave to them."

"Trust me with your life, Rory," returned the woman. "Oh! my son—my son, take care of yourself, for my sake, darling!"

"Never fear, mother," cried the fearless youth, as he dashed down the steep hill with the others. "I'll live long for you, and for vengeance on the foes of our land. Pray for us, mother."

And the six armed men went hurrying down the mountain side, Tade Tully, who was the scout of the party, leading the way.

Yes, the six men were outlaws in the land of their birth, and for no other cause in the world, save that they opposed the tyrants who oppressed that land and scourged her people.

Rory of the Hills was once the owner of a fine estate, a fond husband and a happy father.

When an English army invaded Ireland, to sweep the country with fire and sword, Rory joined the Irish forces, fighting under one of the bravest generals in the world that day, and long and valiantly did he fight for his native land.

The Irish forces were at last compelled to yield to the overpowering armies of England, and Ireland was at the mercy of a merciless enemy.

Many of the Irish soldiers and chiefs sought service in foreign lands, for their homes and property were confiscated, their lands taken from them, and they were proclaimed as outlaws.

But bold Rory, with a choice band of daring spirits, refusing to fly the country, sought refuge in the wild mountains, from whence they pounced down on their enemies whenever an opportunity offered.

Rory of the Hills was the leader of the band of outlaws who refused to submit to the English tyrant, and his name soon became the terror of the neighboring garrisons.

Large rewards were offered for his head; great inducements were held out to his followers to betray their chief, and he was hunted like a wild beast of the forest; but still the bold outlaw defied his foes, and carried on a system of warfare that was a perpetual torment and terror to the English troops.

Young Rory was reared in the wild mountains of Tipperary, and no eagle rearing its young on the rugged cliffs of Sliev-na-mon could be bolder in protecting its little ones, than was young Rory in pursuit of his father's enemies.

Danger and deadly foes were no strangers to him from childhood; he was as active as the young deer on the hillside; and he had an arm that could wield the pike or the sword with any English trooper in the garrisons below.

And young Rory was a handsome fellow at that, with his dark hair flowing over his shoulders, his sun-burnt cheeks aglow with health and life, and his graceful limbs adorned with the picturesque garb of a mountaineer, set off with loving pride by the hands of his doting mother.

Often and often as the bold father gazed on the form of his promising son, and thought of his former standing in the world below, would he sigh and mutter:

"Oh, what a pity I haven't my own again—for his sake. He'd be a pride to the country."

Down the mountain side the outlaws glide, keeping in the shadow as much as possible, as they draw near the spot where they intend to assail the party marching up the path against them.

In addition to the guns in the hands of the outlaws, each man had a stout ash limb slung over his shoulder, to which an iron pike was secured.

This was the favorite weapon in Ireland at that time in the fierce onslaughts, for the pike was formed to allow its owner to cut or thrust, as necessity required.

"Halt!" whispered the leader, as the party reached a huge pile of loose rocks. "How many hounds are coming, Tade of the Owl's Eye?"

"Just ten in all, brave captain," was the scout's reply. "Faith, I'm thinking they thought to steal a march on us, they're marching so careless."

"No doubt of it," muttered the leader, as he watched his foes. "Down with you all, boys, and don't fire till I give the word. I had my doubts of that rogue who was hunting up above last week, and stopped at the cabin. Mary said he had the eye of a hawk. Heaven help him, if he's among them to-night. No mercy for spies, boys."

"No mercy at all, says I," muttered old Bitter Con. "Sure, but 'tis a word that's never heard with those who—"

"Silence!" commanded the leader, as he leveled his gun at the oncoming band. "Make ready, boys, and fire low. Aim below the glittering bayonets. One volley, and then dash on them with the pikes, after they've emptied their guns against the rocks. Steady, now, and watch for my shot."

"Steady it is," replied young Rory, who was crouching beside him. "Won't you give the challenge to them, sir?"

"Certainly, my son. I'll never risk firing on friends, though I don't think there's any doubt here."

"The devil a doubt, captain," said Tade the Scout, in a voice that could not be heard ten yards away. "I can see the buttons on their coats as easy as I can feel the gun in my hand here."

"Who goes there?" demanded Rory of the Hills, as he stood erect, and held his gun presented at the officer who led the party.

"Friends to King George and foes to all robbers," was the prompt response of the English officer. "'Tis the voice of Rory of the Hills, men. Make ready—fire!"

CHAPTER II.

DOWN AGAINST THE SOLDIERS—A BRIEF STRUGGLE AND FIERCE PURSUIT—YOUNG RORY'S CHALLENGE—THE DUEL WITH COLD STEEL.

BEFORE the English officer's voice died away on the mountain side, and before his men could lower their weapons to fire, a loud volley rang out, and half a dozen leaden messengers whizzed out from behind the rocky barrier.

Three of the English soldiers fell to the ground at this charge, and the young officer's sword was knocked from his hand by a bullet striking it near the hilt, but the gallant fellow stooped down the next instant to pick it up, as he cried:

"Fire and charge, men! At them with the bayonet, and give no quarter! Charge!"

Rory of the Hills stood erect to witness the effect of his fire, when the English party sent a volley against him, and soon his mocking laugh was ringing out defiance, ere he cried to his men, in a bold voice:

"At them with the pikes, boys! Charge for Ireland and for vengeance!"

With fierce yells the six Irish pikemen dashed down the hill to meet the English soldiers, and young Rory was foremost in the charge.

"Steady, men, steady," said the young English officer, as he saw that some of his men wavered at the headlong approach of the outlaws.

"Fight beside me, Rory," cried the outlaw chief, springing to his son's side. "All together, brave men of the mountain!"

"Hurrah—hurrah!" yelled old Con Jackson, as he waved the gleaming pike above his head while he dashed on beside his leader. "There's great fun afore us, brave Rory."

"Take the officer, Rory," said the outlaw chief to his son. "I'll take the big fellow on his right. By St. Patrick, but he's a brave man!"

Rory of the Hills alluded to the young English officer, who was leading his men in the charge, as he flourished his sword in gallant style, and sent forth his commands.

"Steady, men, steady," he cried again as the outlaws were on them. "Death to the rebels!"

"Death to the tyrants!" cried Rory of the Hills, as the outlaws closed with their foes. "You'll never fight in a bad cause again, my brave fellow. Well done, Rory! Don't strike the man when he's down, Con."

Young Rory had singled out the English officer and made at him with a long pike.

The young Englishman stood his ground like a hero, and attempted to strike aside the ugly weapon with his sword, shouting to his men at the same time in a cheery voice.

Young Rory's first thrust failed, for the brave Englishman parried it with infinite skill, and he was about to make a fierce lunge at the young outlaw, when Rory, with a lightninglike movement, struck his sword from his hand, and then struck him to the earth with a blow on the head.

"He's a brave man, and I couldn't find it in my heart to kill him," cried young Rory, as he stood over his fallen foe. "Will you cry for quarter now, sir?"

"Quarter, indeed!" yelled old Bitter Con, who had just felled one of the soldiers. "Drive the pike into his heart, young Rory. 'Tis little quarter they'd give us!"

"That's right, my son," again cried the outlaw chief, as he pushed the venomous old man aside. "Didn't I always tell you, son, that no true Irishman should strike a foe when he is down? The fight is over, boys, and the battle is ours. Secure your prisoner, Rory. The others will bring help to bury the dead in the morning. Oh, the cowards! See how they run!"

The fight was over, and six of the English soldiers were lying dead on the hillside, four of them were flying for their lives, pursued by the outlaws, and the young officer, half stunned by the blow he had received, was lying on the ground, staring up at young Rory.

"The fight is against you, sir," said the young outlaw. "Are you much hurt?"

"Finish your work at once, rebel!" said the mortified man. "I am at your mercy. Send your steel into my breast. I wouldn't have spared you a minute. Strike!"

"Didn't you hear my father say that I must never strike a man when he's down, sir?" responded young Rory. "Get up, sir, and

watch the hunt down the hill. Ha—there's another of your men down, by Heavens! Mark Mullins caught him in the back with his pike!"

"The cowards!" muttered the English officer, as he watched the fierce pursuit. "If they stood like soldiers, we could crush these wild rebels!"

"You would, eh?" said young Rory, who had heard the officer's muttered words. "You stood like a soldier, but you didn't crush me."

"If you were armed with a sword, rebel dog," returned the English officer, in insolent tones, "and not with that barbarous weapon, I would have stretched you dead before me."

"You would, indeed, eh?" retorted young Rory, with a malicious smile, as he drew a bayonet from the musket of one of the fallen soldiers. "There's your sword there, sir. Pick it up, if you please."

"What for, rebel?" inquired the young English officer, as he stared at Rory in astonishment. "Am I not your prisoner, sirrah?"

"You will be my prisoner, sir," replied Rory, "when I've given you a lesson in fencing and good manners. You see, my friends are all away in the hunt, and we stand here alone, with only the dead and the dying to see us. Take up your sword, sir."

"Do you mean to say that you will match yourself against me with that bayonet?" demanded the young officer, as he picked up his sword.

"That's just what I mean to do, sir," responded young Rory, with a playful smile. "You boasted just now that I had you at a disadvantage with my long pike. This bayonet is not as long as your sword, but 'tis long enough for me. Stand your ground, sir, and we'll have it out before the others are back."

"And if I kill you, young rebel?" said the officer, as a gleam of joy brightened his face, while he grasped his weapon with great confidence.

"If you kill me," responded Rory, "you are free to go and tell your brother officers that you killed the son of Rory of the Hills. Your name, sir, before we do battle? You know me."

"My name, young rebel," replied the officer, proudly, "is Edward Crawford, Captain in his majesty's service."

"Any relation to Lord Crawford, sir?" inquired Rory, in eager tones.

"Lord Crawford is my father, sir," was the proud response, as the young man stood on his guard.

"Heaven be praised!" cried young Rory, joyfully. "This is more than fortunate. Know, sir, that your father is my father's most bitter enemy. He robbed us of our land, and made us the outlaws we are."

"He won the land with his good sword, rebel," cried Edward Crawford, in disdainful tones, "and he holds it still. I am glad we meet on equal grounds, for I have sworn to my father to hunt you and yours to the death. Have at you, hound!"

"Hold one moment, sir," cried young Rory, springing back to avoid the thrust made at him. "Know you that your father will pass by the Glen of the Rocks before morning on his way to Cork city?"

"I do, but he will be well guarded, rebel," returned the young officer. "Your miserable band will not dare attack twelve of the king's troopers. Have at you, fool. I would kill you and escape ere your wild companions return."

"You'll have plenty of time to kill me, sir, ere they can get up here again. If you kill me, you can fly to tell your father that he will be attacked at the Glen of the Rocks, for my father is pledged to make him prisoner to-night. Now, set on, and see what your good sword will do against this bayonet."

With a smile of confidence on his handsome young face, the English officer advanced to the attack.

At that moment the moon peeped out from behind the clouds, throwing its light over the mountains and on the gleaming weapons of the young combatants.

Captain Crawford was tall and strong of limb, active and courageous, and—he was an expert in the use of the sword—he anticipated an easy victory over the wild lad of the mountain.

But young Rory could handle the short steel as well as the long pike, as Captain Crawford soon discovered, and to his great surprise.

Putting forth all his strength and skill, the young officer attacked Rory furiously, with the purpose of slaying him before the other outlaws could return to his assistance.

Standing on the defensive for the tierce, with his foot firmly planted before him, young Rory received the attack without flinching an

inch, and parried the thrust with a grace that told of his familiarity with sword play.

"Why don't you kill me, sir?" he cried, as his opponent paused for breath. "You thought to make very short work of the wild out-law."

"By George, but you fence well, robber!" returned the gallant young soldier. "Who taught you?"

"My father, sir," replied young Rory, with honest pride. "He was considered the best swordsman in Ireland when he commanded a regiment against the invaders. Try again, sir, or will I have at you?"

"Come on!" cried young Crawford, in confident tones, as he presented his weapon. "I'll eat my sword if I do not cut you down this bout."

"You'll eat your words, at any rate," cried young Rory, as he sprang to the attack. "Now, braggart, fight for your life!"

And the two young men, impelled by fierce and deadly emotions, joined in the desperate conflict.

Then it was thrust and parry, parry and thrust with rapid motions on each side, and the tall Englishman, with all his skill and strength, was compelled to own in his heart that he had found his match in the wild lad of the mountain.

Along the hillside they fought, now stepping over the bodies of those who had fallen in the fray, as young Rory forced his antagonist back, and disdaining to take advantage of the stumbles of his foe.

"Make haste and kill, sir," cried Rory, at length, as he cast his eye down the hillside, "for they're coming back again."

Uttering a maddened oath, the young officer made a desperate thrust at young Rory, and the next instant his sword was flying in the air, while Rory stood before him, with his bayonet at the breast of his foe, and a triumphant smile on his manly young face.

"Are you ready to die now, sir?" he demanded, drawing back the weapon as if preparing for a deadly thrust at the unarmed officer's breast. "Did I beat you fair, braggart?"

"You did," was the bold response. "Strike, rebel, for I'll never sue for quarter. I'll never surrender to a rebel."

"Hold, Rory!" cried his father, as he sprang up the hill, followed by the other outlaws. "You are my prisoner, sir. Give me your word of honor not to attempt escape, and your life is safe with us. Your name, sir?"

"He's Lord Crawford's son," replied young Rory, to his father.

"Lord Crawford's son!" yelled old Bitter Con, with a fierce oath. "Kill the young villain at once, boys. Sure, his father hung my own brave boy. Death to the tyrant's son!"

"Death to all the Crawfords!" cried Mark Mullins, the big farmer. "His father hung mine before my very eyes—the tyrant!"

"Ay, ay—death to the whole brood!" cried Pat Meagher, the scout. "His father shot my brother in cold blood. No mercy to the young bloodhound!"

"No more of this, men!" commanded Rory of the Hills, in trumpet tones. "I am your leader, and I say you will not kill him. He is my son's prisoner, and he will decide his fate. What say you, my good son?"

"He fought me bravely, father," replied Rory, flinging aside the bayonet, "and he didn't offer to run like the others. Let us hold him, and make his father pay a heavy ransom for him."

"We'll take his father before morning," said the outlaw chief. "Bind him, boys, and tie him to that tree, while we march to give battle to the troopers. We must be at the Glen of the Rocks before an hour, or they'll escape us."

"I'd sooner be hanging him to the tree," grumbled Bitter Con, as he seized the young officer, "but 'tis a fine night's work, anyway, and won't I have a crack at your old tyrant of a father afore long!"

"Hush, Con, and don't abuse a beaten foe!" cried Rory of the Hills. "Seize and load your guns again, my brave lads. Gather the muskets of the soldiers behind the rocks. They'll serve to arm some more of our lads. Get ready for the march. Our night's work has only commenced."

"Hurrah for brave Rory of the Hills!" yelled old Bitter Con. "He's the hero to give us fine sport intirely. Bravo to you, young Rory, for 'tis you're the lad can handle the steel."

"And hit the eagle flying!" cried tall Mark Mullins. "My blessing on you, Rory, and put a bullet through Lord Crawford's head to-night."

"No, no, no!" thundered the leader. "Remember, my son, that a young lady will be in the coach with him. Shoot as many of the troopers as you can, but don't fire at the carriage."

"I'll mind you, father," responded young Rory. "I won't mind Con Jackson."

"Forward—march—for the Glen of Rocks!" cried the outlaw chief. "Captain Crawford, you'll have company before daylight breaks."

And Rory of the Hills led his band down the hill, leaving the young officer bound hand and foot to a tree, and venting curses loud and deep on his cowardly men.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE GLEN OF ROCKS—THE SUDDEN ATTACK—YOUNG RORY AND THE INSOLENT BEAUTY—THE RETREAT AND THE STAND.

"WHAT a glorious night, father. See—the moon is coming out over the mountain top. This would be a nice night for an adventure with the outlaws of the mountain. Father, did you ever encounter this Rory of the Hills?"

"I did, Fannie—years ago! I crossed swords with him in battle."

"And he lives, father!" exclaimed the young girl, in astonishment. "How could that be?"

"Simply because I couldn't kill him, Fannie," replied the father, with a quiet smile. "He struck me from my horse with a blow from his sword, and spared my life afterwards, though I had taken his land from him."

"Indeed, father! And was he a gentleman ever? I had an idea that he was always a wild barbarian—an ignorant outlaw."

"You were in great error, then, Fannie. This Rory of the Hills was an educated gentleman and a gallant officer. It is my duty to hunt him to death, and hunt him I will, for he is a rebel, but I would that he could escape to France with the others. I do not care to have his life on my head."

"If I were a man, father, I'd hunt him and his lawless followers as you'd hunt wild beasts on the mountain above. I'd not show them any mercy in the world, father. Edward says they're a bloodthirsty set of savages, living on pillage and robbery. Oh, I'd not spare the fiends, sir."

"I'll not spare them, daughter, and yet you must remember that they have some excuse for their lawless ways of life. We drove them from their homes and their lands. We were the victors, and we took our rewards. It is our duty to crush them, and we must crush them, Fannie, but yet I cannot blame Rory of the Hills for fighting for his life."

"Fighting like a common robber, father, and training his young savage of a son in the same way!" exclaimed the tyrannical young girl. "Dear me, father, I'd like to see them both hung upon that great tree over there. I'm sure they're no better than wild savages. What wild spot is this, sir?"

"This is the Glen of Rocks, Fannie. In this very pass I encountered Rory of the Hills ten years ago. Heaven trust I'll not meet him to-night."

Lord Crawford and his proud daughter were riding in a closed carriage, drawn by four spirited horses, and a dozen troopers attended them as an escort on their journey.

"You certainly do not fear him, father," remarked the spirited girl, "and with such a band of gallant troopers around us, sir?"

"Not for my own sake, Fannie. I fear no mortal foe. But I would not care to encounter an attack in this lonely glen, daughter, while you are exposed to the bullets. The outlaws would not spare one of my blood, were we to suffer defeat."

"Nonsense, father! you will not tell me that the wild savages will dare attack such a body as we have around us? Heaven! what is that?"

As if in answer to the young girl's derision, a wild shout was heard on the moment, followed by a discharge of firearms from the rocks on each side of the pass.

The carriage was halted on the instant, as one of the horses received a bullet in his shoulder, and cries of agony told Lord Crawford that some of his troopers had been served with similar messages.

"Remain in the carriage, Fannie!" he cried, as he opened the door and sprang out on the pass. "Dismount, and charge over the rocks, men. Fire on the outlaws. See—they appear on each side. Dis-lodge the miscreants. Fire, and then charge; I will lead you."

And, drawing his sword, the brave old veteran placed himself at

the head of the eight troopers who had survived the first discharge of the outlaws, while his brave daughter, not in the least dismayed at the threatened danger, peered out of the carriage to watch the fray, as she cried:

"Oh, would that I were a man, brave father. Crush the wild savages, good soldiers!"

"Take aim, and fire again!" rang out the voice of Rory of the Hills. "On your lives, don't strike the coach. Quick—till we're at them with the pikes."

The troopers sent one volley against the rocks, and then, with Lord Crawford at their head, they made a rush at the rebels; but, ere they could reach the barricade, another volley from the outlaws stretched three of their small band in the narrow pass.

"Charge!" shouted Lord Crawford, as the outlaws with their long pikes appeared on the rocks. "Down with the robbers!"

"At them, my brave lads," cried Rory of the Hills, springing out on the pass, and waving the long pike above his head. "Halloo, Lord Crawford, we meet once more in the Glen of Rocks."

"And for the last time, robber," cried the old soldier. "Stand together, men, and crush the vile dogs. Oh, cowards—cowards! Will you fly before such foes? Will you desert my daughter?"

"Cowards—base cowards!" cried the young girl, as she sprang out of the carriage, while four of the troopers, panic-stricken by the wild cries of their assailants, as well as by the terrible weapons bearing on them, mounted their horses and dashed away through the pass at a full gallop. "Oh, you savages, don't murder my father!"

Lord Crawford was at the mercy of his old foe again, for Rory of the Hills, with one sweep of his pike, sent the old veteran's sword against the rocks at the side of the pass.

"The savages don't murder their prisoners, young lady," said young Rory, who had just dispatched a trooper with his pike; "and don't you be afraid of them, either, miss."

The proud girl stared defiantly at the young fellow, who stood bowing before her, hat in hand, with a graceful mien and a proud look of triumph on his glowing countenance.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded the haughty beauty, in disdainful tones.

"I am called young Rory of the Hills, lady. Yonder is my father. We had other titles in days gone by, but your father robbed us of them as he robbed us of our broad lands."

"There's a troop of horse riding into the glen, brave captain," cried Tade Tully, the keen-eyed scout, from the top of a rock. "There's over fifty of them, if there's a man, captain."

"Secure your prisoners, and bring them away to the mountain," cried the outlaw chief, as he cast a look at the strong party now riding through the pass at full gallop.

"You surely will spare my daughter!" cried Lord Crawford, as he was seized by two of the outlaws and forced up the rocks.

"Don't plead for me, father," cried the indignant beauty, as she looked at the fast-riding troop approaching to the rescue. "The savages will soon be punished for their conduct. Don't dare touch me, you vile robber."

"On my faith, Miss Crawford, but you must ride up the mountain with me," cried young Rory, as he seized the indignant girl around the waist, and lifted her on one of the fallen trooper's horses. "Never fear that I'll harm you. There, now, and away we go for a fine ride up the mountain. Let us see if any of the band behind will be bold enough to follow where I'll lead you."

And the dashing fellow was on the horse's back behind the indignant girl, facing him up over the rocks as he spoke.

In the meantime two of the outlaws were forcing Lord Crawford up the rugged mountain side, and when the galloping troopers reached the scene of the conflict they could see their enemies, about fifty yards above, bearing away the prisoners.

"Dismount and after the dogs!" yelled an angry voice. "They have captured my father and sister!"

"That's my noble brother!" cried Fannie, in joyous tones. "Oh, you vile wretch—you wild savage—he'll soon avenge the insult!"

"Faith, but I'm glad to see he's bold enough to face his horse up here, young lady," replied young Rory. "As to the vengeance, I don't think he'll fancy facing me again, for I disarmed him and took him prisoner an hour or so ago. I don't know how he escaped so soon, for we left him, tied fast to a tree, up the mountain side."

"Disarmed my brother, you savage!" cried the indignant girl. "Oh, you brute, don't drag my father along so cruelly. Oh, shame!"

"If he don't stir his legs more, I'll prod him with the pike," roared old Bitter Con, as he urged the prisoner along.

"Touch him with your pike on your life," cried Rory of the Hills. "Lord Crawford, you are my prisoner to-night, and you must fly as we fly. I will take your life if we are compelled to leave you. Hasten, sir, hasten, or you are a dead man. Send one volley back at them, men. Aim at the foremost. They dare not fire at us."

With a wild cheer of defiance, the outlaws paused a moment in their flight, and sent one volley at their pursuers below.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" yelled Con Jackson. "There's three of the villains down. Be the great gun of Athlone, but 'tis a great night for sport intirely."

"You savages," cried Fannie, as she turned to her friends below. "Press on, my gallant brother, and avenge your soldiers."

"He is coming on like a good rider, young lady. Oh, but if we had but a score or so more of our band, 'tain't flying we'd be. Hurrah, hurrah! there are friends above coming to our aid. Now, miss, wait till you see how Rory of the Hills will fight on his mountain domain."

"Hurrah, hurrah!" shouted the other outlaws, in response to the cries of their friends on the mountain above.

"'Tis the boys from over the hills come to share in our sport," cried old Bitter Con, as he danced with glee. "Oh, but this will be a night to be remembered be the redcoats!"

"Load again, men," cried Rory of the Hills. "Rory, ride on fast with the young lady. Push on with Lord Crawford, Mark Mullins, and guard him on your life. Welcome, friends, welcome! Form here behind the rocks, and we'll give them battle in earnest. Push on, Rory!"

CHAPTER IV.

CAPTAIN CRAWFORD TO THE RESCUE—THE BATTLE ON THE HILLSIDE—FEARLESS FANNIE VIEWS THE STRUGGLE—YOUNG RORY AT WORK AGAIN.

FANNIE CRAWFORD was a soldier's daughter, fearless and observant in the hour of danger, and she had full reliance in her brother's courage and ability to rescue his father and herself from the "wild savages of the hills," as she was wont to style the outlaws.

Though the troopers who had acted as an escort to the carriage did not fight with that stubborn bravery of which she had heard so much, Fannie attributed the panic to the sudden midnight attack, and she now felt sanguine of a full triumph and a speedy vengeance on the savage foe, led on by the famed Rory of the Hills.

When young Captain Crawford was left tied to the tree on the mountain side, he knew that Rory and his followers hastened away to attack the carriage, and he struggled with all his might to break his bonds, in order to hasten to the nearest barrack, and fly to the rescue with assistance.

The determined fellow worked with great persistence until he succeeded in freeing hands and feet, and then he did not linger an instant, but started down the mountain side and away to the town, where his troop was lying.

As the young soldier was smarting under defeat at the hands of the young mountaineer, he urged the troopers to a full gallop in making for the pass, filled with a burning desire to engage his late adversary in the glen before his father's carriage could be attacked.

But he was too late, as we have seen, and now his father and sister were in the power of the outlaws, unless he could overtake them on the hillside before they gained any of their hiding places.

Captain Crawford had over fifty stout troopers under his command that night, while he was aware that the outlaws in the pass only numbered six armed men when they attacked the coach.

While Fannie and her father were in the midst of the retreating outlaws, Edward Crawford did not dare order his men to send a volley after them, but he urged his party up the steep hillside in the hope of getting to close quarters ere the fugitives could load and fire again.

But the troopers, with their heavy boots and armor, were not as fleet of foot as the light-footed mountaineers, and it is a question if they could have caught them at all had not the latter's movements been impeded by Lord Crawford, who would not be urged on the flight.

Now, Rory of the Hills was the last man in the world to fly before

an enemy when there was a chance of a fight on anything like equal terms, and the arrival of his friends from over the hills gave him a force at his command nearly equal in numbers to the troopers.

Mustering his band behind the rocks, and disdaining further flight, the daring outlaw prepared for a desperate battle.

Captain Crawford was impatient to make a dash to the rescue of his helpless relatives, and he urged on his horse, calling on the troopers to follow him, when a volley from the outlaws above stretched six of his party on the hillside.

Undismayed by this volley, the dashing young officer pressed on, calling on his men to return the fire, and then charge with their swords.

The troopers responded to the fire, and then, swinging their carbines, they drew their heavy swords and rushed at them.

"At them with the pike again, boys!" yelled Rory of the Hills, springing out from behind a rock at the head of his party. "Give them an Irish charge in earnest!"

"Engage them, sergeant!" cried Captain Crawford, dashing into the midst of the rebels and clearing his way right gallantly. "Follow me, some of you, till we rescue my father and sister! Ha—rebel dog! your son will feel this sword to-night. Father—Fannie—I fly to your rescue! Fly on, brave soldiers, and avenge your comrades! On with me, some of you!"

When Rory of the Hills sprang out from behind the rocks, brandishing his pike, he charged full at the young horseman and aimed a blow that was intended to cut the bridle of the horse. Captain Crawford saw the outlaw's object, and turned the animal aside on the instant, striking at the outlaw at the same time.

Rory of the Hills stumbled over the rough ground, and before he could recover himself he received a blow from the sword on the side of the head that sent him to his knees.

"Down with the redcoats! save the brave captain, boys!" yelled old Bitter Con, as he stood over his fallen leader. "What are ye at, at all, boys, and the villains on us. Face them like me, and give them the pike. Ha! the young captain is through us. Hold your ground, ye villains!"

The charge of the troopers was so fierce at the outset as to bear the outlaws before them, and Rory of the Hills was in danger of the death he had braved so often, when his old follower sprang to his rescue and cut down a trooper whose sword was raised to strike the fallen leader.

Encouraged by the daring of the old fellow, the outlaws crowded around him, giving the troopers thrust for thrust and blow for blow.

Captain Crawford, in the meantime, only waiting to see that his men were fighting bravely, dashed up the mountain on his horse, followed by one of the troopers, who had kept near him as he fought his way through the opposing outlaws.

Young Rory had halted his horse on the hill above to watch the fray, and his heart was bursting with impatience to fly to his father's assistance, when he saw that the outlaws were giving way.

"Oh, the cowardly villains!" he yelled, as he saw that his brave father was down. "I can't stand this another minute, young lady. I must go back to help them, though he ordered me to ride on with you. Hurrah! but they're fighting bravely now. Bravo, Con Jackson. Hold your own, boys, and I'll soon be with you to show them how I can strike to avenge my father. Young lady, you are free."

"And no thanks to you, young savage," said the young lady, in triumphant tones, "as here rides my noble brother to the rescue. Oh, I was certain the wild rebels couldn't stand against our brave soldiers. This way, brother."

"By Heaven!" cried young Rory, as he sprang from the horse and advanced down the hill, pike in hand, to meet his late opponent and the trooper, "but I'll show, proud girl, that I can stretch him low once again this night. Here's at the pair of you."

"Ha, ha! rebel-robber," cried Captain Crawford, springing from his horse and advancing up the hill to the encounter, "I'll punish you with death for daring to molest my sister. Remain on the horse, Fannie, and witness how we avenge the insult. See, young rebel, I have slain your father with this sword. Now is my hour of triumph and of vengeance."

"Brave words, indeed, braggart," cried young Rory, "when you have help beside you. But here's at you, in Heaven's name. Ha! there are more troops coming up from the pass, and the boys are giv-

ing way. Father—father! I can die fighting for you. He's not dead. He's up. I'll soon be at your side, sir."

As young Rory spoke he made a dash at his two opponents, with the gleaming pike upraised before him, while he kept an eye fixed on the combatants on the hill below.

He saw that his father, with the assistance of Con Jackson, had arisen from the ground and was retiring behind the rocks, while the other outlaws were fighting bravely to keep back the onpressing troopers.

The struggling outlaws were so busy with the troopers that they did not perceive the approach of another party up the hill, but young Rory's keen eye had detected them, and he was now fully bent on reaching the scene of the struggle below ere the great odds would render it impossible for the outlaws to bear away their wounded leader.

Fannie Crawford still sat on the horse as young Rory rushed on his foes with the pike, and the young girl could not suppress a cry of agony as she saw the weapon raised above her gallant brother's head.

The cry of agony was soon turned into one of joy, however, as Fannie beheld the stout trooper's sword cleaving the rebel's pike staff in twain, and the pikehead falling harmlessly beside her brother's feet.

"Don't slay the young savage, Edward," she cried, thinking that young Rory was at the mercy of his foe. "Gracious Heaven! but he is a brave young rascal. Beware, Edward!"

Yes, Rory seemed for the moment to be at the full mercy of his two foes, who stood before him with their swords presented at him, while he had but the broken staff wherewith to defend himself.

"Yield, robber, and beg for mercy!" cried Captain Crawford. "Assist me to rescue my father, and I will endeavor to spare your life."

"Yield, indeed?" yelled young Rory, striking at the young officer with the broken staff, and hurling him backwards with the blow. "My father never taught me that word. Here's at the pair of you again."

And Rory stooped down suddenly, seized the end of the staff with the pike on it, and was facing his foes with a dangerous, though unequal weapon, before they could thrust at him.

At that moment wild cries from the hill below told the young man that the reinforcements to the troopers were on his friends, who commenced to retreat up the mountain, leaving his wounded father in the hands of the enemy.

With a cry of rage, young Rory called on the outlaws to stand by his father, and then struck out at his two foes with all the fury of a young madman.

Captain Crawford and the troops stood boldly to the attack, receiving the fierce blows on their swords, and endeavoring with all their strength and skill to disarm or slay the furious outlaw.

As Fannie Crawford witnessed this struggle and saw, also, that the troopers below, having routed the outlaws, were hastening up toward them, she cried out in pity:

"Fly, ere 'tis too late, young man. You cannot save your father."

"I can—and I will," yelled young Rory in defiant tones, as he sprang in on the stout trooper and dealt him a blow with the pike that sent him bleeding to the ground. "Now, Captain Crawford, we are man to man."

And young Rory dashed at the officer with such fury as to force him down the hillside, despite his best efforts to hold his ground.

"That for you, young braggart!" yelled Rory, as he struck the captain's weapon from his hand and dealt him a blow on the shoulder that sent him reeling on the hillside. "And now, young lady, you are my prisoner again. You'll be hostage for my brave father."

Fannie Crawford had forced her horse down after the combatants in her anxiety to witness the struggle, and, before she could turn to fly, young Rory sprang behind on the animal and faced him up the steep hill at a full gallop, as he shouted at the top of his voice to the troopers behind:

"Hurt another hair of my father—Rory of the Hills, who is your prisoner—and Lord Crawford and his daughter will share his fate. Fear not, bonnie young lady, for I will not harm you, and they but release my father. Your father is a prisoner still, and all the troopers in Ireland will not rescue him or you if my father suffers death at the hands of his foes. On—on, good horse, and we will defy them!"

"Oh, for mercy's sake," cried the young girl, now thoroughly alarmed at the manner and voice of the impetuous young outlaw, "do not bear me away up that wild mountain, sir! Your angry followers will not spare me or my father should the troopers below kill your leader. Oh, have pity on me, I pray you!"

"Fear not the wild savages!" yelled Rory, as he urged on the horse. "You will be safe with me, and so will your father, Miss Crawford, should no ill befall mine. Ah! yell, you hounds! But there's one Rory of the Hills to defy you yet! I must blindfold you when we get at the top of the mountain, Miss Crawford, but fear not."

"Blindfold me, indeed!" exclaimed the terrified girl, as they were joined by some of the retreating outlaws. "Oh, sir, if you were to imprison me in one of your wild caverns I'd die of terror."

"Fear not, lady. Was father much hurt, Con Jackson? Oh, why didn't you retreat before the other troops were on you?"

"He's more stunned than hurt, sir," replied the old outlaw. "Faith, young Rory, but we stood by him while we could, and I for one, am ready to be at it again if you'll lead us to the rescue, only they're two to our one."

"I'll rescue him, Con, never fear. And Lord Crawford is safe with us, man?"

"Safe and sound, and under ground by this, young Rory, where he won't be found in a hurry, I'll warrant ye," replied the old outlaw, with a cunning grin. "'Twas a fine night's fun, after all, only they were too many for us. The night is dark now again, and there's no fear of them following us much. Call the boys together now, young Rory, for you're our leader until the master, Heaven guard him, is clear again."

Young Rory gave the signal whistle on the instant, and he was answered from the mountain top, where the retreating outlaws had assembled.

CHAPTER V.

THE WOUNDED OUTLAW—ON THE CLIFFS—RORY'S DARING ESCAPE—
ANOTHER ATTACK—THE MAID OF THE MOUNTAIN APPEARS.

SOLDIERS do not care to fight in the dark, especially when treading an enemy's ground.

Captain Crawford arose from his second defeat in a fearful rage, and his fury was redoubled when he saw that young Rory was riding up the mountain with his sister.

Though feeling the effect of the blow he had received on the shoulder, the young officer was compelled to lean on one of the troopers, while he urged the others on in pursuit, crying:

"A hundred crowns to the man who slays that young dog and rescues my sister. Pursue the robbers, men, and crush them."

"The moon is hidden again, captain, and 'twould be dangerous to follow them into an ambush," remonstrated the old sergeant, who had bravely shared in the stubborn fight. "Had we not better summon more aid and attack their stronghold in the light of day?"

"I will rescue my father and sister to-night, sir," cried the impatient young fellow. "Ha, robber, you bit the dust at last."

The last sentence was addressed to Rory of the Hills, who was dragged before the officer by three of the troopers.

The outlaw's face was pale, there was clotted blood on his forehead, and it was evident that he suffered acute agony of soul and body, but his eyes were fearless still, and his voice rang out a manly defiance as he retorted in proud tones:

"Methinks you have not much to boast of, Captain Crawford. If my eyes fail me not, I saw you on the ground a moment hence, and I think your suffered at the hands of a foe who defeated you before to-night—my brave young son."

"Pursue the outlaws, soldiers," cried Captain Crawford, as the troopers assembled around him. "Lead this outlaw in the front rank, and he will be the first to fall in any ambushade. I know your cottage, Rory of the Hills, and 'tis near your hiding place for a certainty. If you don't release my father and sister on the instant, I will hang you in the presence of your wife."

"Ha, ha!" cried the outlaw, in angry tones, as he turned his defiant eyes on Captain Crawford. "You were the young hunter who was up in our mountain retreat yesterday? Know, sir, that the woman you threaten saved your life when my good weapon was aimed at your heart. A generous return, indeed, for a gallant soldier. Lead on, and you will see if the outlaw's wife quails at your threats. Your father is in my son's power. Let us see if I will not be avenged.

Come on, and visit the outlaw in his mountain home—you'll get a warm reception."

"Wait for morning's light, Captain Crawford," again advised the old sergeant.

"Push on," cried the young officer, as he was assisted to his horse by two of the troopers. "I'll not wait another instant till I rescue my father and sister. I think I can find their hiding place."

A mocking smile was the only reply from the mounted outlaw to this threat.

"Forward, march," rang out the order from the young captain as the troopers fell in line. "Send out your skirmishers, Sergeant Buford, and keep the robber in the front rank."

There was not a ray of light from the moon to guide the party up the rugged mountain side, and the young officer was compelled to trust to his knowledge of the locality to guide them to the cottage where he had received hospitality on the previous day.

The body of troopers numbered nearly seventy men, some twenty of their number having been in the struggle, while the old sergeant had left half a dozen of his force with the horses in the glen.

"If I were free," muttered the outlaw to himself, as he scanned the mountain top with his eagle eye, "they would never march up here in this order. I wonder can Tade Tully be on the lookout?"

As if in answer to this question the cry of an owl was heard on the heights above as a crouching figure was seen to move along toward the cottage, where the anxious wife had just received her son and the prisoners.

"They're on the lookout," thought the prisoner, as the young officer led them up the steep path to the cottage. "If they do not offer fight again, it will all depend on my wife. All is lost if they force the secret of the hiding place from her."

"Who comes there?" demanded a well-known voice from the cliff above.

"'Tis the young rebel," cried Captain Crawford, as he recognized the voice on the instant. "Answer, outlaw, as you value your life, and demand the release of my kindred."

"'Tis I, Rory—a prisoner," replied the outlaw. "Have you secured your prisoners?"

"They're safe, father," was the response. "Will we offer battle again, sir?"

"Fire a single shot, young robber," cried Captain Crawford, in thundering tones, "and your father dies on the instant."

"Kill him, if you dare," responded the defiant young rebel from above, "and your father and sister will share the same fate, Englishman. Give but the word, father, and we fire."

"No—no—no!" cried a female voice from the cottage, as the outlaw's wife ran out. "Oh, Rory, my son, do not allow them to kill your father before your very eyes. Oh, Rory—husband—tell us what to do to save you."

"Release your prisoners, or he dies on the instant, woman," cried Captain Crawford. "Assail the house, soldiers! Give no quarters to the outlaws!"

"Hold your prisoners on your life, my son!" cried the captive outlaw, while three troopers held their carbines to his breast as the others dashed up the path. Don't shoot Lord Crawford until you see me fall. Retreat for the present, Rory; don't show the hiding place, wife."

Rory and his mother dashed behind the cottage as Captain Crawford led his men to the front, yelling forth as he brandished his sword:

"Burst in the door and search the house! Seize the woman, and we'll force her to tell where they have hidden my kindred! Father—Fannie! do you hear my voice! Look to your prisoner down there, for there's treachery on foot! By Heaven! Rory of the Hills has escaped!"

Yes, brave Rory of the Hills had effected his escape, and in a daring manner.

While the three troopers were still holding their weapons pointed, but while their attention was directed to the attack on the cottage for the moment, the outlaw sprang on a rock and disappeared behind before his guards could either fire on him or strike him down with their weapons.

Then it was that a wild shout of defiance burst out from the cliffs behind the place, and twenty guns belched forth the messengers of death.

The troopers were somewhat staggered at this unexpected attack, but obeying the commands of their watchful young captain, they sent back a volley from their carbines ere they dashed up the cliff to storm the strong position, well assured that they far outnumbered the outlaws.

"Force in the door with me, some of you," cried Edward Crawford, flinging himself against the cottage with all his might. "Have they fled along the other way, sergeant?"

"They've disappeared as if by magic, captain," answered the old trooper from the cliff. "I cannot see a single one of them."

"Hold the place up there, then, and watch for the rascals," again commanded the young officer, as the door was forced in. "Now in with me, some of you, and strike a light. Father—Fannie! are you within hearing? Come out from your hiding place, young rebel, and face me once again."

There was no answer to this appeal at the time, and no living being appeared in the cottage when one of the troopers struck a light at the smoldering fire on the hearth.

Captain Crawford stared around the humble cottage for some moments, and he uttered a cry of joy as he picked a white object from the floor, ere exclaiming:

"This is my sister's handkerchief. She must have been here recently. In Heaven's name, what can they have done with them?"

"I'll answer that question, and you promise to leave this house in peace, sir."

"By George, if it ain't my pretty maid of the mountain," cried the young soldier, as a fair young girl of seventeen entered the room from another apartment and stood before him. "Who are you, young damsel? Where is my father—my sister?"

"Your father and sister are safe, sir," said the strange girl, in honest tones. "I can assure you with truth, for I am Ellen, daughter of Rory of the Hills."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPOSITION AND THE PLEADER—NO RANSOM FOR OUTLAWS—THE CHALLENGE AND THE DEFIANCE—AT IT AGAIN.

THE young captain stared at the girl in silence for a few moments ere he exclaimed:

"Rory of the Hills your father, Ellen! How can that be, when I knew you in Fethard as Miss Ellen Meagher? 'Tis impossible!"

"Meagher is mother's name, Captain Crawford. It was not deemed wise for a rebel's daughter to proclaim her name in a town garrisoned by British troops," replied Ellen. "I assure you that no ill will befall your father and sister if you withdraw from this at once. There's been bloodshed enough for one night. 'Tis impossible to rescue them to-night—no, not if you had five regiments at your back, Captain Crawford."

"Do you imagine for an instant, young lady," rejoined the young officer, "that I will retire without finishing my duty, by crushing the robbers of this mountain and rescuing my kindred? You little know me, indeed."

"Your father, with all the troops at his command," said the girl, "has been for fifteen years endeavoring to crush us, sir, and he has not succeeded. But my father has grown tired of a hopeless struggle, and he means to join our people in France."

"Then why attack and capture my father and sister to-night?" demanded the young officer. "Why retain them as prisoners?"

"Because we want to force from you a portion of the gold of which your father robbed mine. We would all seek homes in France, but not as beggars, sir, while you enjoy our lands. That is why my father seized your father and sister to-night, and they will be held until you pay a large sum for their ransom, I assure you."

The outlaw's young daughter spoke with an air of determination, glancing defiance at Captain Crawford the while.

"And you countenance such an outrage, Ellen?" he asked, as a new light seemed to break on him. "My sister was your friend at Fethard."

"Ay, I countenanced the outrage, as you call it, Captain Crawford, and I aided in it. It was I who brought the information to my father that they would pass the Glen of the Rocks last night; and what do I care for the friendship of one whose father robbed mine? I have been the daughter of Rory of the Hills, and the sworn foe of those who forced him to seek shelter in those hills. I am proud that

I was instrumental in getting our enemy into our power. You must pay a royal ransom if you would free your kindred.

And the young girl uttered the fearless threat as if she had the power to enforce her arguments with something stronger than words.

"On my word," sneered Captain Crawford, "you speak like one who was a victor, after I having driven your skulking father and brother into their hiding places. Why, you are even now in my power, pretty traitress! What can hinder me from bearing you away as a prisoner?"

A scornful smile passed over the girl's face, as she replied:

"You little dream, sir, of what you speak. Make me your prisoner, indeed! Well, that is what I am here to propose. I will ride with you to Fethard in order to procure the ransom for your kindred, and then a word from me will set them free. Refuse me, and not you or one of your men will live to reach the foot of the mountain!"

"That's a vain boast, girl, when I have already hunted your savage friends into their hiding places," again sneered the young officer, impatiently; "but this is sheer folly. I am here to rescue my father and punish his enemies. I arrest you as an accomplice in the treacherous attack on him. Seize her, soldiers!"

"Have a care, Edward Crawford—have a care!" cried the young girl, springing back. "Know ye now that my father's friends throng to his aid. 'Twas to save useless bloodshed that I appealed to you. Touch me, and you will never reach the pass below. Your father has already consented, as this writing will show you, to my father's terms. My father has received a wound, but my gallant brother is only too willing to lead the mountaineers at your troopers. Heed my advice, and read this paper, sir."

The young officer seized the paper from the small hand outstretched to him, read the words written thereon, and cried:

"My father—Lord Crawford—is mad. Give you two thousand crowns and send you to Cork to take shipping for France, girl?"

"So your father advises, sir," said Ellen, "and your sister approves. They think it a cheap price for getting rid of Rory of the Hills and his family."

"The outlaws are swarming on the hills, Captain Crawford," remarked the old sergeant, as he appeared at the door of the cottage, "and daylight is breaking. A safe retreat would be in order, sir."

"I tell you I'll never retreat until I have rescued my kindred!" cried the headstrong officer. "So much the better if we have daylight to continue the struggle, sergeant. Girl, where is my father and sister, I demand of you?"

"And I am here to answer you!" cried young Rory, as he drew his sister from the room and appeared himself, leading the officer's sister by the hand. "Speak out, Miss Crawford, and spare us further bloodshed if possible. This young hero will not take warning by his two defeats at my hands to-night. Hear your sister, sir, and stay your hand, or I will not spare you the third time!"

"Rescue my sister, soldiers!" he cried, as he sprang upon young Rory for the third time that night with his drawn sword. Give battle to the outlaws, men, and rescue my father!"

"Oh, Edward—brother," cried Fannie, "heed your father's message, I implore you, or his life will pay the forfeit. I am set free to beg of you to comply with your father's request. Give this young lady the gold, and let her sail with it to France. One line from her to her father will set our father free. Rory of the Hills will never trouble us again, and I am free to go with you now."

Edward Crawford was a proud, stubborn young gentleman, with strong passions and firm convictions of his own.

From his early days he had been accustomed to regard Rory of the Hills as a wretch whose life was an insult to the English laws.

When he entered the army he made up his mind that he would hunt the outlaw down, for he was fully aware that Rory was his father's dire enemy—and that he had sworn to be avenged on Lord Crawford for the loss of his estate.

The young soldier had served some few years against the French in Flanders, and he had but recently returned to Ireland, where his father was governor of the military district in which Rory of the Hills held his foes at defiance.

Captain Crawford, on assuming command of a company of troops in the neighboring town, bent his whole energies toward the destruction of the outlaw and his band.

Disguised as a hunter, he visited the mountain on several occasions with the purpose of leading a chosen band to surprise the outlaws.

He was engaged on such a mission on the night when he first encountered Rory of the Hills and his valiant son; and he had met Ellen in Fethard, a town near by, where the young girl was attending school, and where she was known as the Maid of the Mountains.

We have seen with what courage and ardor Captain Crawford pursued the outlaws—even in the face of personal defeat at the hands of young Rory of the Hills; and we have to record the fact that his stubbornness, at a critical moment, was about to entail further rude disasters on those who followed his fortunes on the mountain.

Young Rory of the Hills watched the young officer and his sister with an anxious countenance.

The young outlaw knew that his father's fortunes were not to be retrieved in Ireland at that day, and he was anxious to get away to France, where many of his gallant young countrymen were winning fame and fortune battling against the English enemy.

The success of their journey to France depended entirely on the work of that night, as it was necessary that Rory of the Hills should drag gold from his old rival, in order to recruit a company on the hills of Ireland for service under the French king.

Therefore it was that young Rory watched the young officer with eager interest, for on his final answer depended his hopes of glory in France, or a life of doubt, and an inglorious death, perhaps, on the Irish hillsides, where his father had battled so long.

"My father must be mad, Fannie," cried Edward Crawford, as he saw that his troopers were forming outside the cottage. "I will make no terms with the vile rebels save an unconditional surrender. Form your men, sergeant, and prepare to storm the cliffs, while I search this house for a secret passage to a cave that lies here somewhere. Young outlaw, surrender, or die on the instant!"

"Surrender, indeed!" yelled young Rory of the Hills, as his sister dashed into the inner room before him, while he seized Fannie Crawford and dragged her in also, closing the door in Captain Crawford's face. "I'll give you plenty of fight before you reach the foot of the hills. You've had but child's play as yet."

"Burst in this door, men!" yelled Captain Crawford, as he rushed against the door. "My father is concealed in here somewhere. What is it, sergeant—the rebels on you in force?"

"That they are, captain, and led on by that wild chap. Let us beat a retreat, sir."

"Never!" yelled Captain Crawford, as he dashed out to face his foes, just as the outlaws sent a volley from the cliffs above. "Stand together, English soldiers, and let fly at the miscreants. Burn down the cottage till we discover the opening to the cave beneath!"

A shout of defiance from young Rory, who stood on the cliff above, greeted this order.

"Ay, burn if you will!" yelled back the young outlaw, "but you cannot rescue your father or your sister. One more volley, men of the mountains, and then down at them with the pikes. This is the first time I've led you, and I'll lead to victory. Charge for Ireland and Rory of the Hills!"

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE THE COTTAGE AND IN THE CAVE—A FEARFUL DENUNCIATION—THE TERRIBLE DOOM THREATENED—YOUNG RORY SURPRISES FRIENDS AND FOES.

THOUGH Captain Crawford appeared to be beside himself with rage, and acted for the moment as if goaded to madness by his subsequent defeats at the hands of young Rory, as well as by the capture of father and sister, the stern old veterans under him obeyed his commands with a decision and readiness that told of their hopes of an ultimate triumph over the outlaws.

There was not a man among that band of troopers who had not heard of the daring deeds of Rory of the Hills and his dauntless followers, and they felt that there was very desperate work before them.

If they could have chosen the battle-ground, they would rather charge against a full regiment of French cuirassiers on the plains of Flanders, in preference to attacking the outlaws in their mountain stronghold, and led on by their brave chief.

Captain Crawford, with all the reverses he had met that night, was still sanguine of victory over the outlaws.

He had more than seventy stout troopers under his command at the moment, and they were all armed with carbine and sword, while their stout armors gave them a great advantage over their enemies, both in the close encounter and with the firearms.

The young officer was savage, indeed, at the presumption of the outlaws in demanding ransom for his father, who held an important position under the British government.

He was enraged to think that he had started out on the previous night in the full hope of surprising Rory of the Hills, only to meet surprise, and defeat, and capture at the hands of a young mountaineer, and one who had never seen battle on a tented plain.

The young officer, in all his anger, could not help thinking of the disgrace that would befall him, should he retire before the outlaws, and he in command of a chosen band of troopers, leaving his father a prisoner in the hands of a man who was a determined and relentless enemy.

"No—no!" he muttered, after he had ordered his men to fire the cottage. "Better to die on the instant than to live to endure the disgrace of defeat at the hands of the vile robbers."

And then the young officer, forgetting father and sister for a time, and thinking only of a crushing defeat for the daring outlaws, arrayed his men in front of the cottage, and prepared for the last struggle.

In the meantime, Rory of the Hills was preparing for the fight, marshalling his followers on the cliffs above, while young Rory was bearing Fannie Crawford into the secret cave behind the cottage, where her father was safely secured.

Young Rory's mother and sister followed him into the cave, and the anxious women were trembling with apprehension, for they felt that a time had come that would decide the fate of those they loved so dearly.

Young Rory was not in the least alarmed at the turn of affairs, and he laughed merrily as he looked at his mother and sister, when they entered the hiding-place with their woe-begone faces, and he then turned to Lord Crawford, who was bound to a post, saying:

"That son of yours, sir, is a gallant young man. He refused to pay the ransom asked, and the fight will now be to the death."

"I am glad my son has refused to retreat, young man," replied the old soldier. "It was only for my daughter's sake that I advised a course so dishonorable. Pay ransom to an outlaw, indeed. Hark, they're at it outside. Oh, would that I were outside to command!"

"And would to Heaven!" cried young Rory, as his proud eyes glistened at the stirring sounds from without, "that I was beside my brave father, instead of standing here, to guard you and your daughter, Lord Crawford."

"We haven't requested you to remain, sir," remarked Fannie Crawford, as she drew near her father, and patted him on the head. "Don't be alarmed, dear father. Edward will soon set us free. Why not join in the fray, young outlaw?"

The captive maiden uttered the words with much scorn, as if to imply that young Rory was afraid to face the battle front, though she felt in her heart that he was as brave a lad as ever met a foe.

"Because my father has ordered me to keep guard here, young lady," replied young Rory, with an impatient gesture, while he listened to the sounds outside; "and because I don't care to see you perish in here, if your brother puts his threat into effect."

"What threat was that, sir?" demanded Lord Crawford, eagerly.

"He ordered his men to set fire to the cottage, Lord Crawford," replied Rory. "If they burn our home, you will need my aid in escaping from this cave."

"How is that, young sir?" inquired the prisoner. "I am sure there's an exit in the back here, as I saw your father and the others go out that way a few minutes ago."

"You can't go out that way, sir," replied young Rory, with a roguish smile, "and your daughter can't, either."

"And why, sir, I pray?" inquired Fannie Crawford.

"That's our secret, young lady," replied Rory, as he bent a meaning glance at his mother. "Only one stranger ever tried that passage, and he's not alive to tell how he fared. Let your son burn the cottage, and you will both perish in this cave. You will be suffocated with the smoke that will come in from the flames."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Fannie Crawford. "That would be an awful death! Burned alive, indeed, as it were."

"Your very good father there, young lady," retorted Rory, with a malicious smile, "could tell you about whole families perishing in that way. Will you tell her, sir, of the raid you made with the yeomen one night? Will you tell her how you surrounded the houses of the poor people in the valley below, and how you set them on fire, when the brave hearts inside refused to open their doors, to be led out to be

shot by your men? Will you tell her, sir, as my father has told me, until his words burned into my heart, how the women and young girls perished in the flames, sooner than face your troopers outside, when their brothers and fathers would be strung up before their eyes?"

"Oh, that is too horrible!" exclaimed Fannie Crawford. "Father, it cannot be true."

"It is only too true, young lady," said Rory's mother, "for I witnessed such a scene with my own eyes, and your father witnessed it also, for he commanded the party. His orders were that night: 'burn and slay all before you, soldiers! We'll never conquer the rebels, save by exterminating them, root and branch!' Can you—dare you—deny what I saw, Lord Crawford?"

A stifled groan from the guilty man was the only reply to the accusation.

"Oh, father—father," cried his daughter, "we are lost, indeed. The cottage is on fire! See—see! the light is breaking in from that opening. Oh, have mercy on us, good people. Ellen—Ellen! I was your friend and playmate. Plead for us. Have mercy on my father!"

"Aha!" cried young Rory, as he saw the smoke breaking through the opening. "They have set the cottage on fire—the fiends! Lord Crawford, your own son has sealed your doom. Mother—sister—escape through the secret way in the back, and leave the villain to his fate. I will bear the young lady up by the cliff-path over the cottage."

"Oh, mercy—mercy!" pleaded Fannie Crawford, as she clung to her father. "You will not leave him here to die such a death? Are you human, or are you only savages?"

"Only savages!" cried young Rory, as he seized her in his strong arms and tore her away from her father. "Only savages to those who have treated us as such, but we are human beings to those like you, who do not murder women and children. Away—mother—sister—away! Remember our oaths to father. No stranger must ever know the secret of the inner cave. Come with me you must, young lady. You will not perish here!"

"Oh, brother—brother," cried Ellen, "do save him also."

"Away, Ellen—away!" cried young Rory, as he bore Fannie Crawford to the front of the cavern. "He had no mercy on your aunts and cousins. You must come with me, young lady!"

And young Rory sprang out of the cave with Fannie Crawford in his arms, while his mother and sister retreated to the back, leaving the tyrant lord alone in the smoking cave.

While this scene was being enacted in the dark cavern, all outside was battle, and fire, and the fierce cries of the combatants.

When half a dozen of the troopers had fallen by the bullets of their enemies on the cliffs above, Captain Crawford ordered his men to seek the shelter of the rocks before the cottage, and keep up a steady fire at the outlaws, wherever they appeared on the cliffs.

Rory of the Hills knew full well that it would never do to charge down on his foes in the daylight, as half of his force would be sure to fall by the guns of his foes, ere they could get at close quarters with their pikes.

Besides, Rory's band was far inferior in numbers to that commanded by Captain Crawford; and he did not care to risk all in a struggle that would be so desperate.

"If I fall," thought the outlaw, "my poor wife and Ellen will be at the mercy of the tyrants. I must not risk it."

And the outlaw was content to keep up the somewhat equal combat at long range, trusting that more of his friends would hasten over the hills to his assistance.

While Captain Crawford, with his young impetuosity, was eager to make a charge up the cliffs against the outlaws, the old sergeant at his side, seeing the madness of the undertaking, prevailed on him to desist.

In the meantime, the cottage had been set on fire, and the straw thatch of the roof was soon in flames, the rafters below catching also.

"Ha, ha! boys," cried Rory of the Hills to the followers around him, as he saw his cottage burning, "'tis little the stubborn young fool thinks he has sent his father to death. But I pity the young lady."

"Pity, indeed," growled old Bitter Con. "'Tis small pity the villain ever showed our wives and daughters, captain. May the devil roast——"

"What madness is that of Rory's?" cried the excited father, as he

saw his son appear on the cliff over the cottage, dragging some form from out of the opening. "Surely he could escape by the secret way and leave them to their fate. Aha! they are out to fire on him. Fire, men, fire!"

Captain Crawford, watching the burning cottage, was the first to perceive young Rory emerging, as from the flames, on the cliff above.

The young officer was so surprised at the appearance of his enemy in such a place, that he could not utter a word at first.

The next instant, however, he was out before the cottage, shaking his sword at Rory, and crying out to the troopers, in fierce tones:

"Shoot the young scoundrel. Fire on him, ere he escapes up to the rest!"

"Ah, blaze away!" cried young Rory, as he lifted Fannie Crawford from out of the mouth of the cavern, and held her before him. "Blaze away, and murder your sister, as you have already murdered your father, you fool!"

CHAPTER VIII.

YOUNG RORY HEEDS AN APPEAL—A DEVOTED ACTION—INTO THE DEADLY CAVE—THE CRY OF JOY ON THE CLIFFS.

THE moment Rory of the Hills had given the order to fire on the troopers below, he saw that he was putting his son's life in jeopardy, and he sprang out before the leveled guns, crying, in a voice that was heard above the roaring of the flames:

"Hold, on your lives, hold! You will kill my gallant son!"

"No fear, father," responded young Rory, as he retreated backwards up the steep cliff, still holding Fannie Crawford between him and the fire of the troopers, and thinking that his father alluded to the danger in front. "They'll not fire on me."

"Oh, you cruel wretch!" sobbed Fannie, as she sobbed aloud, "to leave my father to perish in that cavern. Oh, brother, save father! he is in the cave. He will soon be dead. Oh, you vile wretch! how I hate you!"

Young Rory had paused to draw breath at that moment, and he turned his bright eyes on the young lady, as he replied, in deep, earnest tones:

"I couldn't ever expect that you would love me, Miss Crawford. I never expected anything but hate from one of your name."

"I could love you! I would love you! I will love you!" was her passionate exclamation, as she clasped her hands imploringly. "Save my dear father, and I'll worship you."

With a cry of joy that resounded over the mountain, young Rory placed Fannie Crawford on a rock, pressed her hand within his own, and cried, in manly tones:

"I'll save him, for your sake, dear young lady, although he's my father's most bitter enemy. I'll save him, or die in the attempt, and then you won't call me a savage."

And the desperate young fellow darted down the cliff toward the mouth of the smoking cavern.

"Fire on him!" yelled Captain Crawford, who did not comprehend young Rory's purpose in dashing back.

"No—no—no!" screamed his sister, in frenzied tones, as she imploringly held up her hands. "Oh, Edward—Edward! he's going to save father—the brave youth! Oh, don't fire!"

"Hold, Rory!" cried his father, springing upon the cliff. "Great Heaven, the boy is mad entirely! Oh, Merciful Father, he's into the smoking cavern! Come back, Rory! Come back, on your life, I command you!"

But young Rory either heard him not, or he did not heed the command from the father who was never disobeyed before, for he darted into the opening, crying once more to Fannie Crawford, in ringing tones:

"I'll save him, or die trying it, young lady, for your sake?"

"Oh, brother—brother!" cried Fannie, as she knelt on the cliff above the burning cottage, "why don't you try to save father?"

"Let him try, and I'll put a bullet in his heart!" cried the enraged Rory of the Hills, as he leveled his gun at the young officer, who was making desperate efforts to ascend the jagged rocks to the mouth of the cave.

"Oh, monster—monster!" cried Fannie, turning to the outlaw above; "you have no heart at all, but your son has. How could you ever have such a noble son!"

"My heart was as noble as his, young lady," cried Rory of the Hills, in proud, manly tones, as he stood erect on the cliff, "ere your

father's cruelty and English tyranny drove every noble feeling out of it. I demand a truce, Captain Crawford, or I will shoot the young lady where she stands. Do not fire, men."

"Do not fire, soldiers!" echoed Captain Crawford, as he reached the spot where his sister stood, and gazed in horror at the mouth of the smoking cavern. "Oh, Fannie—sister—'tis certain death to enter there! Father will perish. The young savage cannot save him."

"The young savage was not afraid to dare it, Edward!" cried his sister, "and father was his enemy. Oh, Edward, your soldiers are brave in battle, when death is not certain. The young savage has braved certain death to save the man who would make him an outlaw."

"Right bravely spoken, young lady!" cried Rory of the Hills, as he sprang down the cliffs, his gun leveled at Captain Crawford. "And so, gallant soldier, you think it is certain death to enter that smoking cavern; you are right. There's but one chance in a hundred that he will escape. Come, sir, and I offer you a challenge."

"What is it, outlaw?" demanded Captain Crawford, in haughty tones.

"My son has entered the smoking tomb to save your father. There's a chance that the rash boy has borne him near the entrance here, and that they there sank from the effects of the suffocating smoke. I'll in to save my son; you come with me to save your father, or let us all perish together. Come, sir."

For a moment, and a moment only, Edward Crawford quailed before the terrible ordeal.

And then, with a proud, fearless smile, he flung down his sword, crying:

"Lead on, outlaw! It shall never be said that I feared death in such a cause. A truce, men—a truce for the time."

"A truce, boys, a truce!" cried Rory of the Hills; "don't fire a shot or deal a blow till you're sure we're dead!"

And the daring man, holding one hand to his mouth and nose, darted into the smoking opening.

"Oh, Edward—Edward, don't sacrifice your life in vain!" cried Fannie. "They are both dead now. Oh, brother, 'tis madness!"

The gallant young officer did not heed the appeal, but, following the example of Rory of the Hills, he sprang in through the opening.

"What is all this?" cried a frantic voice, as Ellen ran down the cliff, followed by her mother. "Where is father? Where is my brother?"

"Oh, Ellen—Ellen, I crave your pardon for calling your brother a savage. He is the bravest gentleman in Ireland to-day. He has plunged in there to save my father."

"My son—my son!" cried the outlaw's wife, as she glanced in terror at the smoking opening. "My son has gone to his death! Oh, where was his father, not to stop him!"

"His father has gone in to save him," replied Fannie, "and my brave brother is with him. Oh, pray to Heaven they may all come out alive!"

"Oh, woe is me," sobbed the agonized mother, as she fell on her knees. "To lose husband and son in such a frightful way. Oh, my brave husband—my darling boy—I would not weep for you, as I do, had you fallen in battle. To die thus, trying to save the life of the tyrant who has been hounding you as he would a wild wolf. Oh, God pity me!"

"There is hope yet, mother," cried her daughter, as she kissed the weeping woman. "Rory may have borne him out the secret way, where the current of wind does not strike."

"Oh, bless you, Ellen," said Fannie Crawford, as she clasped her old schoolmate's hand. "But your father and my brother. Can they escape in that way also?"

"We'll soon tell," replied Ellen, as she turned to some of the outlaws, who had mingled with the troops during the truce, and who were all gathered on the cliffs above the burning cottage watching the thrilling scene with intense interest.

"Up, you great fools," cried Ellen, addressing the outlaws, "and see if they have not appeared yet at the other opening. Hold back, there, you soldiers, and watch here with us. You must not go up there on any account."

"But they will murder Lord Crawford and our captain," grumbled the old sergeant, as he made a movement up the mountain with some of his men, "unless we're there to protect them."

"They will not murder them!" cried Fannie Crawford, springing

to intercept the soldiers. "They are not savages, to slay and devour those they may save from death! Back, sergeant, back, and watch here with us! Oh, Ellen—Ellen, is there any hope for the loved ones?"

"Very slight, indeed," replied the brave mountain maid; "but there's always hope. Oh, mother—mother, don't despair so!"

"I can't help it, daughter. My heart has gone out of me. I'll never see my dear husband or my darling—"

"Listen!" cried Fannie Crawford. "Hear that cry of joy above. Oh, what does it mean, Ellen—what does it mean?"

A wild, thrilling shout arose from the outlaws on the cliffs above, and those below could see that some of them were fairly dancing as if with delight, as they shouted and waved their hats.

"Oh, what can it be?" cried Fannie again, while Ellen darted up the mountain.

"They're saved—they're saved!" cried Ellen, as young Rory appeared on the cliff, holding an inanimate form in his arms. "Your father is saved, Fannie Crawford."

"But my brother and your father," cried Fannie, as she peered upwards. "Are they saved also?"

"My husband—what of my husband?" cried the outlaw's wife.

"There's no sign of them," cried an outlaw, from the cliffs above.

"Young Rory says he didn't see his father at all."

"Oh, God!" sobbed the outlaw's wife. "My darling husband has perished. Rory of the Hills will never be seen again."

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG RORY'S ANGER—ANOTHER CHEER ON THE MOUNTAIN—THE PROPOSITION—AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE FOR RORY OF THE HILLS.

"WHAT'S this I hear about my father?" cried young Rory, as he darted down the cliff, his eyes blazing with anger.

"Oh, Rory—Rory," replied his mother, "he's dead—he's smothered in there in the cavern, and he'll never lead you down the mountain again, my son."

"What took him into the cavern at all, mother!" demanded young Rory.

"He went in there to save you, sir," replied Fannie, as she pressed young Rory's hand; "and my brother went with him to save father. Oh, bless you for saving my father. Oh, how can I ever thank you? Father—father, I'm rejoiced to see you alive! But poor Edward—poor Edward is dead."

"My son dead," said Lord Crawford, still half stupefied from the effects of the smoke.

"Yes, father, noble Edward went into the cavern, with Rory of the Hills," said Fannie, with tears in her eyes. "They went in to save you, and they did not come out."

"Oh, husband—husband!" cried the outlaw's wife, "will I never see you again?"

"Faith, but you will, wife!" cried a manly voice, as Rory of the Hills, his face begrimed with smoke, staggered out of the cavern opening, bearing Captain Crawford in his strong arms. "Restore this young man to life, all of you! Get water—get water! Lord Crawford, your son may stand fire, but he can't stand much smoke. There's nothing ails me, good wife. I'm as well as ever."

"Long life to Rory of the Hills!" cried Con Jackson, as he flung his hat high into the air. "Oh, but he's the hero who's not afraid of steel or fire. Raise the cry, boys, till the mountain re-echoes it afar. Long life to Rory of the Hills!"

And then such a wild shout as arose on that Irish mountain, as the outlaws greeted their gallant chief.

Even the stolid English troopers caught up the cry, and they joined in the shout for famed Rory of the Hills.

Lord Crawford had now fully recovered his presence of mind, and he was bending over his son, who was rapidly being restored to life by the attentions of Fannie and Ellen, when the outlaw approached him, saying:

"Lord Crawford, you must remember that you are still my prisoner. The truce is over, and we will back to our old positions."

"Edmund O'Hanlon," returned Lord Crawford, addressing Rory of the Hills by the name he bore before he became an outlaw, "is there anything I can do to make amends for what has passed—to reward you for your noble conduct this day?"

"Amends from you, Lord Crawford?" cried Rory of the Hills, with

infinite scorn in his voice and bearing. "What amends can you offer that will restore me to the life of other days. What can—"

"I can plead with the government, O'Hanlon," interrupted Lord Crawford.

"Plead for me to the English!" exclaimed the outlaw. "I would sooner be dragged limb from limb than accept a favor at their hands—at your hands, sir. I have lived as a freeman in this land of slavery, and I'll never bow the knee to the English yoke."

"But you spoke of going to France, O'Hanlon," continued Lord Crawford, while his daughter regarded him with approving smiles. "The ransom you demanded will be forthcoming. I will aid you in—"

"You will aid me in nothing, sir," interrupted Rory of the Hills. "You robbed me of my estate, and I, for my children's sake, demanded that you would pay me for that estate. Had I only myself to think of, I would fight you to the death. As it is—"

"As it is, dear husband, accept the gold and let us away to France in God's name. Think of Ellen here. Think of brave young Rory above there," pleaded the outlaw's wife.

"Where is Rory?" inquired the outlaw, looking around for his son.

"He's gone up to secure the secret passage, father," whispered Ellen, in his ear, "and he's sent off for aid across the mountain. If you must fight them, we'll soon have help. Don't demean yourself for my sake, father."

"Surrender, outlaws!" cried a harsh, stern voice from the plateau near the cottage. "Lord Crawford, I'm delighted to come to your rescue."

"Oh, Heaven, see all the soldiers!" cried the outlaw's wife. "Oh, Rory, husband, you are betrayed. Fly—fly!"

"Too late now, wife," replied the outlaw, as he folded his arms, and looked down at the large body of troops who were formed in front of the ruined cottage. "Oh, where were your eyes, that didn't see them coming up the hill? Thank fortune, they won't get my son!"

And Rory of the Hills, was, indeed, betrayed, but it was through his own noble act.

While the four men were in the cave, and while friend and foe alike had only eyes for the scene before them, up the mountain marched a full regiment of English troops, under the command of General Fulton, one of the most severe commanders in the army—and one who never offered any mercy to the rebels.

This regiment was now drawn up along the slope below, and every gun was aimed at Rory and a few of his followers, while General Fulton and a dozen of his men stood between the outlaw and Captain Crawford, his father and sister.

"Surrender, outlaw!" again cried the English general, while Lord Crawford was dumb with astonishment at the unexpected rescue.

"Oh, General Fulton, cried Fannie Crawford, "that man has just rescued my brother from a terrible death. His son has just saved my father. You will not injure him?"

"Not injure Rory of the Hills, young lady!" replied General Fulton. "By my honor, that is a strange request. If I live till then, he dies the death of a traitor to-morrow."

CHAPTER X.

A SHORT EXPLANATION—THE OUTLAW'S APPEAL TO HIS WIFE—A BATTLE IN EARNEST—YOUNG RORY AS A MOUNTAIN CHIEF.

It will be necessary, before proceeding with the stirring events that follow, to explain the sudden appearance of the strong force under General Fulton on the mountain that morning.

When Captain Crawford sallied out with his band of troopers to the rescue of his father and sister, he sent word to the next town, where a large force of English troops were garrisoned, that he was in pursuit of the outlaw; and that he would penetrate into his stronghold, if necessary, in order to rescue the captives and crush Rory of the Hills.

General Fulton, who was in command of this garrison, being a tried veteran of many battles, and who was also one who never underrated a foe, was apprehensive that the young officer could not cope with the outlaws on the mountains; more especially if Rory of the Hills had time enough to summon his friends from the neighboring stronghold.

This veteran knew that the outlaw could muster, at least, five hundred men, when he had timely warning that his stronghold was to be

assailed in force; and he also knew that it would take twice that number of English troops to defeat him, or drive him from one position to another.

General Fulton was very much incensed at the outlaw chief, on account of the many daring raids by which he had harassed the English garrison towns; and he had a private grudge against the man who was formerly known as Count Edmund O'Hanlon, as will appear hereafter.

Moreover, the English general had received information that Rory of the Hills was about to leave Ireland to seek service in France, which nation was then engaged in a desperate war with England.

General Fulton knew the chivalrous nature of his old enemy; and he was, therefore, assured that he would not depart from Ireland, and leave the followers, who had stood by him during years of battle and hardship, to the mercy of the English soldiers.

He felt confident that Rory of the Hills would organize a splendid troop before leaving Ireland, and take them with him to France, to fight against their relentless enemies on the battle fields of Europe.

It would be a grand feather in General Fulton's martial cap, if he could not only succeed in crushing Rory of the Hills, but also, at the same time, disperse a force destined to strengthen the French army, then fighting in the low countries and in Italy.

Knowing full well that cavalry would be of small use on the steep mountain passes, General Fulton called out one of his crack infantry regiments, and marched to the pass at the Glen of the Rocks.

When he reached the pass, he found some of the troopers, who were left behind in charge of the horses of those who had pursued the outlaws up the mountain side.

The morning was breaking when the English general reached the point below the cottage, and from whence he could perceive that a struggle was going on above.

Calling on his men to observe strict silence in their movements, and to steal along by companies, the veteran commander was enabled to form his full regiment on the plateau below the burning cottage, just at the moment when Rory of the Hills issued from the cavern, bearing the insensible form of Captain Crawford in his arms.

Feeling assured of a speedy triumph over his old foe, General Fulton did not hesitate to call on Rory to surrender, thinking that, when he had the leader in his power, he would have no trouble in dispersing or destroying his faithful followers on the cliff above.

Rory of the Hills was a prisoner, indeed; but his gallant young son was yet free; and General Fulton little dreamed that he would have to encounter a foe who could and would perform feats of unparalleled daring in rescuing a beloved father or in avenging his death.

The wary veteran did not know the mountain paths beyond were thronging with hardy mountaineers, who were hastening to enroll themselves under the banner of the young son of Rory of the Hills.

When General Fulton gave forth his cruel ultimatum, that Rory of the Hills should die on the morrow, the soldiers were securing the prisoner, while his weeping wife and his daughter looked on in silence, the former giving vent to her feelings in tears and sobs, but Ellen looked on with an eye that never blanched.

"You have me in your power at last, General Fulton," said the prisoner, in reply to the cruel threat, "and I expect no mercy at your hands, as I ask none. General, you are a brave soldier, but you were always a heartless, soulless man."

"Silence, outlaw, or I will have you flung into the smoldering flames below!" cried the stern veteran. "Who are those people, Lord Crawford?" he continued, pointing to the weeping wife and the outlaw's daughter, who clung to the prisoner.

"His wife and daughter, General Fulton; and I crave your mercy on their behalf."

"Crave no mercy on our behalf, Lord Crawford," said Ellen, in defiant tones. "We seek none—we ask none at his hands."

General Fulton stared at the outlaw's wife for a moment with great astonishment, and then started back, as if in terror, exclaiming:

"Is it possible I see the living before me? Who are you, woman?"

"Answer him not, wife!" cried the outlaw, in angry tones. "General Fulton—"

"Who are you, woman?" again demanded General Fulton, as he continued to stare at the outlaw's wife in an amazed way.

"Silence, on your life!" roared Rory of the Hills, in thundering tones.

"Drag him away. Lead him down the hill!" cried General Fulton, as he continued to stare at the outlaw's wife.

"Don't answer him, on your life, wife!" cried the outlaw. "Follow me!"

"No, you must not stir from here. You must answer me, woman!" cried General Fulton, as he seized the outlaw's wife by the arm and kept her back.

"I will not answer you, sir," replied the distressed woman, as she broke away from his grasp, and darted down after her husband.

"Seize that woman! Bring her back here!" yelled the excited officer.

"I beg of you—I pray of you, General Fulton," interposed Lord Crawford, "not to molest the poor woman. She——"

"She is not a poor woman, Lord Crawford," interrupted the excited general. "Pardon me, but I must have my own way in this affair."

"The outlaws are mustering in force on the cliffs above, general," announced an officer.

"Bear the prisoners down the hill, and we will disperse them," cried the general, as he pointed to Ellen and her mother. "Lord Crawford, will you retire, or join with me in the attack? Away with them."

"Why should I be a prisoner, General Fulton," demanded Ellen O'Hanlon. "What crime have we committed, sir?"

"Away with them to the rear!" cried General Fulton, as he cast his eye up at the gathering foe. "We'll have a little work there, I take it, Lord Crawford. But the dogs won't stand long now they've lost their chief."

"Be not too confident of that, general," replied Lord Crawford. "His son is with them, and he's a young dare devil, indeed. I will fight with you, old friend!"

"Tis well, my lord. Is that your son retiring with the prisoners?"

"My son has just escaped a fearful death, as I have myself; and——"

Lord Crawford's sentence was broken in an abrupt manner by a ringing volley from the outlaws on the cliffs above.

Young Rory of the Hills, who was now in command of nearly five hundred men, had only waited to see his mother and sister, with Fannie Crawford, safe, beyond the fire of his men, when he attacked the English.

And a right earnest attack it was, as more than a hundred soldiers fell at the first volley of the outlaws.

"Seek the shelter of the rocks, soldiers!" yelled General Fulton, as he sprang down to command his force. "One volley at them, and then we'll up with the bayonet!"

A wild cheer burst from the outlaws as the smoke cleared away, and they witnessed the havoc caused among the soldiers by their first volley; and young Rory sang out:

"Load quick, my brave boys, and give it to them again! They must not take my father away with them. Aha! they're seeking shelter! Quick, and give them another!"

"Hurrah for young Rory of the Hills!" yelled old Bitter Con. "He's the boy to give it to the English dogs! See how they're lying there, like so many slaughtered sheep!"

"Down, men—down!" yelled young Rory. "They are going to fire."

"Heaven alive! why don't ye stoop down yourself, young Rory?" cried Tade Tully, the scout, as he saw that their young chief kept standing on the cliff, in full view of the enemy below. "They'll riddle you with bullets, man alive!"

Even as the man spoke, a shower of lead had swept over the cliff, but young Rory still held his erect position on the cliff, and raised his hat in defiance, as he cried:

"Quick, boys, and give them another volley, all together. Pick off the officers!"

"Fix bayonets—charge!" cried General Fulton, as twenty of his men fell under the second fire of the outlaws, while his volley swept over the heads of those on the cliff above without injuring a man.

"Double-quick!" he cried again, as he led the soldiers up the steep cliff. "We must not give them time to load."

"Load—load!" cried young Rory, as he saw the foe advancing up the hill. "Quick, and give them a few volleys before they're on us."

The English force had to march fully a hundred yards before they could reach the outlaws with their bayonets, and they had not gained a third of that distance on the steep, rocky mountain, when another terrible volley went crashing through their ranks, sweeping down the soldiers at a fearful rate.

"Hurrah, boys—hurrah!" yelled young Rory, as he saw the effects of the fire. "They're wavering now, and we'll soon beat them. Quick, and load again, and give them one more."

Another wild cheer broke from the outlaws, as they saw the English column wavering on the hillside, and they hastened to reload their weapons.

"Tis madness to attempt to carry that position," said General Fulton to Lord Crawford. "We will retreat from their fire, and see if we cannot assail them on the flank."

"I was about to suggest that plan, general," replied Lord Crawford. "Ha, my son, you are with us again, I see! What would you say?"

Captain Crawford, who had accompanied his sister and the prisoners to a place of safety in the rear, had just arrived in time to witness the effect of the terrible fire from above.

"I would say, sir," replied the young officer, "that I know a path to the left here, by which we can gain the cliff above without being exposed to this terrible fire."

"Retreat—retreat!" sang out General Fulton. "Retreat at the double-quick, and we'll reform below behind the rocks. Hasten—hasten, ere they have time to reload—the wretches. I'll make them suffer for this yet!"

The English troops did retreat with a vengeance, as they scampered down the steep hill like so many sheep flying from a pack of wolves, leaving their dead and wounded after them.

Oh, such a yell as burst from the outlaws as they saw their foes flying in apparent confusion; and old Con Jackson cried out:

"Let us at them, young Rory. We can now finish them with the pikes."

"No—no!" thundered the young chief. "Load again, as fast as you can, and fire. We are not strong enough to charge them yet."

The outlaw prisoner beheld the conflict from the hill below, and his heart was beating with pride and hope, as he saw the first repulse given to his captors.

"He'll rescue us yet, wife!" he cried, in joyful tones. "He's a brave lad, indeed."

"He's a young hero," replied the fond mother; "and may Heaven preserve him to us."

"Tis a pity he's not a regular soldier, Ellen," remarked Fannie Crawford. "He would make a splendid officer—he's superb."

"He will be an officer, Miss Crawford," returned Ellen; "and he will gain glory and reward in fighting the enemies of his country. But, see—see—they are forming to renew the attack. One would suppose they had enough for one day."

"Foolish girl," said Fannie Crawford, "you don't know General Fulton or my brave father. They never retreat. Your friends will be annihilated ere long. Retreat, indeed!"

"We'll see," returned Ellen, as she watched the movements of the troops, who were now deploying to the left. "Oh, father, some one is leading them toward the rocky path. They will gain the side of the cliffs before Rory can fire a shot at them. All is lost!"

"All is not lost, daughter, if Rory is as wise as he is brave. I'll trust in him."

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG RORY SHOWS HIS SKILL—STEALING A MARCH ON THE ENEMY—
ANOTHER BATTLE AT THE GLEN OF THE ROCKS.

YOUNG Rory from his position on the cliffs, watched the movements of the troops below with some apprehension, and when he saw them march in order toward the rock-bound path, he almost regretted that he had not taken Con Jackson's advice and ordered a charge on them while they were in disorder in front.

But young Rory was not one to quail in the face of threatened danger.

To be sure, he was not experienced in regular warfare, but he had wisdom enough to know that should General Fulton succeed in gaining the open plains above the cliffs, it would be impossible for the outlaws to hold their strong position without suffering great loss.

There were two courses open to young Rory and his brave followers.

They could rush to oppose the soldiers in the narrow path, and offer them a desperate hand to hand encounter, where their superior numbers would not avail them so much.

But Rory knew full well that his pikes would not prevail against the bayonets of the disciplined soldiers, save where his men had plenty of room for a headlong dash.

Besides, if the soldiers did succeed in forcing their way up, the outlaws would be compelled to fight an unequal battle, as the troops still outnumbered them as three to two.

Rory's main object was to rescue his people from the hands of their enemies, and he could not afford to risk defeat at such a time by any rash movement.

With that object forever in view, he turned and addressed his followers, saying:

"My brave friends, we have beat the enemy so far, but they are going to renew the attack in another way."

"Let them come away, the villains!" cried old Con Jackson, "and we are more than able for them, young Rory—the true son of his father!"

"It will not do, friends," resumed Rory, "to fight them on even terms, for they outnumber us too much. I am now going to propose a bold plan. If we succeed, we will rescue my father, and if we fail, we can't lose very many in the attempt."

"Hurrah for young Rory!" again yelled old Con Jackson, and the cry was caught up until the hills resounded.

"We'll follow you to the death, Rory," cried Tade Tully, the scout, "in rescuing your brave father. Only show us the way."

"They're taking the prisoners down the mountain," cried another, as he pointed to a strong party who were guarding the prisoners down the mountain side, and making great haste.

"We haven't a moment to lose then," cried young Rory. "'Tis the troopers who followed us last night, and they're making down for their horses to the Glen of the Rocks. They'll whip father off to the garrison, if we don't stop them."

"Let's all after them, in Heaven's name," cried old Con Jackson. "He's a dead man if they ever get him to the garrison."

"About a hundred of you will do," cried young Rory. "The rest of you disperse for the present, and meet me to-night at the Glen of the Rocks. If I don't rescue my father before they reach the garrison, we'll attack the place to-night."

"But wouldn't it be better to take all the boys with you, Rory?" inquired old Con Jackson, "and make sure."

"I'll only want a hundred," young Rory said, impatiently. "The rest of you be off and gather all the friends you can for the work to-night. Whether I rescue father or not, there'll be work to do, for I know he intends to make one bold move, and get a lot of plunder before we sail for France. My own lads will follow me. Let the others make off before the soldiers get up. Come along—come along."

And young Rory dashed down the hill, followed by a hundred of his men, while the others dispersed over the mountain.

The party in charge of the prisoners numbered over fifty troopers, and they were commanded by Captain Crawford, who had been ordered by General Fulton to make all haste to the garrison town, as he feared an attempt at rescue on the part of the daring young fellow on the cliff.

The young officer was hastening down the hill with his charge, while General Fulton was leading his force through the rocky path, when young Rory and his band commenced the pursuit, by dashing down the hill to the right.

"Push on with your prisoners, sergeant," cried Captain Crawford. "Sister, you hurry on, also, if you do not want to fall into the power of that young madman again."

"I am not afraid of him now, brother," replied Fannie, with a slight flush. "I can never forget how he saved father's life."

"There's no doubt of his courage, Fannie," said the brave young officer. "I only wish we could save him from the death that awaits him. Push on there in front, or they'll be on us ere we can reach the horses—on—on!"

"Wouldn't it be wise to place the prisoners in the rear, captain?" suggested the old sergeant, "and then the outlaws won't fire on us."

"A good idea, sergeant," replied the captain, "but there are the

horses right below here. Hasten on—hasten on. They're coming on us at a fearful rate, and they outnumber us. The young leader has stolen a march on General Fulton."

"After he had beaten him, Captain Crawford," remarked Ellen in proud tones. "Father, Rory will rescue us all yet."

"Not while I live, young lady," said Captain Crawford. "I am sorry, indeed, that I am compelled to lead you to the garrison. I regret now that I did not accept your father's proposal and pay the ransom. General Fulton is a stern man, and your father has not many hours to live."

"I do not fear for my father's life while my noble brother is free!" cried Ellen. "He will rescue him, if he has to assault the garrison."

"Ay, that he will—the noble lad," cried the outlaw chief, as he looked back at his son, who was leading in the pursuit down the hill. "The young eagle will fight for the old."

The party had just reached the Glen of the Rocks, where the horses were ready for them, when the outlaws dashed on them with their pikes, before they could mount and away.

"Ride off with your prisoners, sergeant!" cried Captain Crawford, as he formed his men to meet the fierce assault. "I'll hold them in check until we receive aid from General Fulton."

With a wild cheer young Rory of the Hills dashed at the old sergeant, crying:

"Strike for your leader, brave boys of the mountain! Strike for the man who always led you to victory. Down with the English!"

The troopers met the fierce onslaught like the bravest of veterans, but they could not resist the terrible pikes in the hands of the desperate mountaineers; and despite all the appeals of their gallant young captain, they broke and fled, some of them mounting their horses, and others fleeing through the pass on foot.

Young Rory of the Hills, disdaining to strike at Captain Crawford, made a dash at the old sergeant, who, with half a dozen of the troopers, was bearing the prisoners away on horsetack.

But the wary old veteran was on the alert, and he rode away with his prisoners, having stampeded the other horses, so as to give the outlaws no opportunity for an immediate pursuit.

Captain Crawford, seeing that further resistance would be madness, sprang on a horse, and rode through the pass, crying to young Rory:

"If you will rescue your friends, come seek them at the garrison, young sir."

"By Heaven, but I will seek them there!" cried Rory. "Hasten, men, and catch some of the horses, till we give chase!"

And the young man stamped his foot in passion, as he saw that all his efforts had been in vain for the time.

But he did not despair.

Tade Tully, the scout, with some of the most active of the band, soon succeeded in capturing a dozen of the troopers' horses; and in less than five minutes young Rory and eleven of his friends were thundering through the pass after his father's escort, while the rest of his band were engaged in catching the other horses, or plundering those who had fallen in the fray.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH—FORCING THE SECRET—A BRAVE GIRL'S ESCAPE—YOUNG RORY OF THE HILLS MARCHES TO THE RESCUE.

It was late that day when General Fulton led his shattered regiment back to the garrison town of Fethard.

The stern old soldier had sought the outlaws all day long, but without success, as they had disappeared when he reached the cliffs by the path, and he could only see the party, led by young Rory, away down by the Glen of the Rocks, attacking the prisoner's escort.

General Fulton sent a company down the hill on the double quick, to assist Captain Crawford, and then he commenced a tedious march over the mountain, in the hope of falling in with the larger body of the rebels.

But he had all his labor in vain.

The company dispatched to the aid of Captain Crawford could not come in time, and General Fulton was compelled to return to the garrison without striking another blow at the bold enemies who had deprived him of so many good soldiers.

Captain Crawford rode out to meet his general, as the latter neared the town.

"I trust, Captain Crawford," said General Fulton, "that you succeeded in bringing your prisoners safe to the garrison?"

"I did, general. Young Rory of the Hills, as he is called, pursued us to the very gates, and then retreated, swearing that he would rescue his father this very night."

"The young hound will be most welcome," said the stern general, with a wicked smile. "T'would be a pity to part father and son, and the old outlaw will die at daybreak."

"You will be hanged at daybreak," was the announcement to Rory of the Hills three hours after, when he had been tried by a military tribunal.

"Then I will die as I have lived, a bitter foe to English rule in Ireland," was the bold outlaw's defiant reply. "And I will trust my son to avenge my death. Can I bid farewell to my wife and daughter?"

"No, outlaw," was General Fulton's harsh reply. "You will never set eyes on them again. We have no mercy on such wretches as you, who defy the king and his authority."

"Ah, General Fulton," replied the outlaw, with flashing eyes, "I fought the king, as you call him, like a brave man, but I never insulted a prisoner when he was in my power. You are a monster—you are a coward!"

"Away with him!" cried the enraged general, as he motioned the outlaw from the court room. "Confine him in the strongest cell and guard him well till morning. Then the king will have one enemy less in Ireland."

And Rory of the Hills was borne to his dreary cell, with the death sentence hanging over him, and without the sad consolation of being able to bid farewell to his wife and daughter.

Yet he did not repine—he never thought of despairing.

The bold man was accustomed to face death on the battle field; he had been exposed to dangers through life, and he did not fear death.

Moreover, he knew that his gallant son was at liberty; that he could muster hundreds of daring men, who would gladly face death in his behalf, and he felt assured that, by morning's dawn, General Fulton would hear from young Rory of the Hills.

Fannie Crawford, who possessed a kindly, noble heart beneath a haughty exterior, paid a visit to the outlaw's wife and daughter in the guard room where they were confined, and endeavored to console them with the hope that her father would prevail upon General Fulton to show some mercy to the prisoner.

"He'll show no mercy!" said Ellen, in bitter tones. "Our only hope is in my brave brother."

"And do you think that he will dare attack this place?" inquired Fannie.

"He will dare anything to rescue his father," was the prompt response.

"Why, Ellen," said Fannie Crawford, "that would be sheer madness. General Fulton has at least two thousand men in the garrison here, and the place is defended by cannon, also. Your brother is daring, I know, but he would be rushing on to certain death."

"And certain death will be his doom if he attempts it," said General Fulton, who had entered the guard room unperceived.

A visible tremor ran through the frame of the outlaw's wife when she beheld the stern-faced general standing before her, but Ellen, who knew what was passing in her mother's mind, greeted him with defiant looks of scorn.

"I have come to ask you once more," said the general, as he bent his stern eyes on the trembling woman, "if you will give me the name you bore in your early days?"

"And I answer for my mother, General Fulton," returned Ellen, "that she will not open her lips on the subject."

"Silence, girl," cried the stern man. "I will know the truth, if I have to drag it from her by the torture."

"For shame, General Fulton!" cried Fannie Crawford. "You should not thus insult the unfortunate. Father will protect you."

"You forget, young lady," said the stern man, "that your father has nothing to do with my prisoners. Yesterday, he was in command of this district. I command it to-day. Will you answer me, woman?"

"My mother will not answer you, sir," again replied the peerless daughter.

"Drag this girl away and confine her in a cell!" cried the angry man, addressing a soldier at the door. "And you will retire, Miss Crawford, for I would be alone with this woman."

"Oh, no, no!" pleaded the outlaw's wife, as her daughter was seized.

"Do not tear my child from me, and I will tell you all, General Fulton! I will——"

"Remember my father's commands, mother!" cried Ellen, as the soldier dragged her from the room. "Speak not a word, or you'll have his dying curse. Speak not a word, or I will hate you—Rory will hate you!"

"Oh, Ellen—Ellen!" inquired Fannie, as she followed the outlaw's daughter into the passage, "what fearful secret is this he seeks to know from your mother? What——"

"Ask me not, Miss Crawford," replied Ellen, "but if you wish to help us, aid me in escaping. Will you do that for me, after what has passed to-day?" she continued, in a whisper.

"I will do it for you, Ellen, and more than that," replied a voice at her side.

Both girls looked at the speaker, and they recognized the voice at once.

It was Captain Crawford, disguised as a common soldier, who had been acting as guard over the outlaw and his wife, in the hope of serving them in some way.

"Oh, Captain Crawford, will you do this for me? and I will bless you," inquired Ellen. "Help me to escape, for I know that my life is not safe, and more—while I am in General Fulton's power, if he discovers who I am, he will not hesitate to kill me."

"I will forfeit my life in your behalf, young lady," replied Captain Crawford. "Change your dress for Fannie's traveling costume, and I will guide you out of the town, and have a horse ready to bear you away. I will place my sister in a cell, and have a guard set over her. Will you bear the ordeal, Fannie?"

"Most willingly," replied Fannie. "And I will bear the whole blame on the morrow."

In less than a quarter of an hour after, Fannie was a prisoner in a cell, and Ellen was riding away to meet her brother at the Glen of the Rocks.

It was past midnight when General Fulton left the guard room, after having forced the secret from the outlaw's wife.

The man's face was pale with rage as he commanded the sentinel to lead him to the cell where the girl prisoner was confined, and he muttered to himself:

"I must secure the young dog, and then I can crush the whole brood."

At that very moment young Rory was marching toward the town at the head of eight hundred mountaineers, and Ellen rode at his side.

CHAPTER XIII.

FEARLESS FANNIE PLAYS A STRANGE PART—A NOVEL PROPOSITION—THE OUTLAW'S BOLD MOVE—THE NIGHT ATTACK ON THE GARRISON.

GENERAL FULTON was in a fearful rage when he left the guard room, where the outlaw's wife was confined, and he called on the sentinel to lead him to the cell to which he had consigned Ellen.

Captain Crawford had returned from escorting the outlaw's daughter beyond the town, and he was now on hand, watching for the outburst that was sure to come, when his general would discover the trick played on him.

"Come out here, girl!" cried General Fulton, in harsh tones, as the cell door was opened.

With her head bowed on her breast, Fannie walked into the passage-way, which was but dimly illumined by the light of a lamp.

"Retire, sentinel," ordered General Fulton, "and see that no one interrupts us."

The soldier was retiring, when General Fulton called him back, inquiring:

"Where is the prisoner—Rory of the Hills—confined, sirrah?"

"In there, general," replied the sentinel, pointing to the cell next to the one where Fannie Crawford had been confined.

"Bring him forth," ordered General Fulton. "Do you know who you are, girl?"

Fannie drew Ellen's heavy cloak about her face as much as possible, as she replied:

"Yes, sir."

"Silence, daughter," thundered Rory of the Hills, as the soldier led him from the cell.

"Yes, father," responded Fannie, in a very low voice, as a merry smile overspread her concealed countenance.

Fannie Crawford was an adventurous creature, and she was inquisitive also.

The young girl felt that there was some mystery on foot in connection with General Fulton and Rory of the Hills and his family, and she determined to know the secret.

To do this, it would be necessary for her to play her assumed part as long as possible, and deceive both the general and the outlaw.

Fannie knew that she was playing a very dangerous part throughout, as it was notorious that General Fulton was a vindictive, unscrupulous man, and one who wielded great power for good or ill.

But Fannie was as fearless as she was inquisitive, and knowing that she had already done enough to incur the anger of the tyrant of the garrison, she made up her mind to follow up the deception, and trust to her father's and her brother's influence to save her from punishment.

"Retire, soldier," cried General Fulton, as he turned on the outlaw, "and see that you guard well the outer door."

"What have you to say to me, cruel tyrant?" demanded Rory of the Hills, as he pressed the hand of the young girl. "Not one word to him of the past, Ellen."

"'Tis needless to warn your daughter, outlaw," said General Fulton in his harsh tones. "I have dragged the secret from her mother."

"Foolish woman," cried Rory, as he glanced at the general. "Oh, but you are only a cowardly tyrant after all, General Fulton. God help you, my dear girl, for he will have no mercy on you now."

"How do you know that, robber?" cried General Fulton, indignantly.

"Because 'tis to your interests to put my children out of the way, tyrant," replied Rory, with a sad look at the girl. "For my brave son, I do not fear, for he is free on the hills; but, oh, my dear Ellen!"

And Rory of the Hills embraced the deceiving Fannie in his strong arms.

The inquisitive girl had to submit to the embrace, but she muttered to herself:

"This is more than I bargained for, indeed; if it was young Rory, I would not mind it so much. Ugh! he nearly hugged me to death."

"I have no intention of putting your children out of the way, Edmund O'Hanlon," replied General Fulton, in a voice that was intended to be conciliatory. "Listen to me, sir."

"I am compelled to," responded Rory, with a shrug of the shoulders, and a grim smile at the iron door at the end of the passage.

"When I beheld your wife to-day," commenced General Fulton, "I took her for the ghost of one I thought to be dead long ago."

"She was dead to you, sir, and 'twas her desire and mine that she would remain so," said Rory of the Hills. "Why prolong this interview, I ask? You refused to-night to allow me to see my wife and child ere I died on the morrow, and now——"

"You will not die on the morrow, O'Hanlon," interrupted the stern general, "and you but submit to my terms."

"Ha, ha!—say you so?" cried Rory, as a flash of joy mantled his brave countenance. "What are your terms, sir?"

"They are very simple," replied the tempter. "In the first place I will get you pardoned, providing you leave the country and promise that you will never return."

"I accept the terms, General Fulton," said Rory of the Hills, "providing you allow my family and faithful followers to go with me."

"Your wife and son, with the outlaws who care to follow your fortunes, may go with you," said General Fulton; "but this young girl must remain in Ireland."

"Ha—indeed!" cried Rory of the Hills, as he pressed the young girl's hand again. "And why must my daughter remain, sir?"

"Because she must wed my son, Edmund O'Hanlon. And more——"

"Wed your son!" exclaimed Rory, as he felt the girl's hand tremble within his own. "Why, sir, your son, as I have heard, is engaged to Lord Crawford's daughter."

"A mere rumor, O'Hanlon," responded General Fulton. "The young lady does not like my son, and she has refused the alliance. Though he is a little wild at present, he will soon settle down after marriage, and he will make your daughter an excellent husband. But you have not heard me out, O'Hanlon."

"Go on, sir," said Rory, while a meaning smile played over his countenance.

"Before your son—who is outlawed, and cannot hold any property in Ireland—leaves the country, he must sign over all right and title to

the property that he might have inherited from his mother to his sister."

"I see—I see," said Rory of the Hills, with a peculiar smile. "You want to secure the property you now hold, General Fulton, and which rightly belongs to my wife, to your son, by a marriage with my daughter. What do you say to that proposition, my daughter?"

Fannie was determined to play the dutiful child to the end, and she responded in a sad, low voice, as she pressed the outlaw's hand.

"I will do anything you say, father—anything to save your life."

"But you have never seen this young man, Ellen. And then to think that you will be parted from us forever."

"If she does not wed my son this very night, O'Hanlon," said General Fulton, "you will die in the morning; and then your wife and herself will be at my mercy."

Fannie, on hearing this decision, was more than ever resolved on playing her part to the end, as she saw that a stirring and amusing scene would soon ensue.

"Oh, father," she said, still speaking in a low tone, and keeping her face concealed in the folds of the cloak, "I will wed the young man on the instant to save your dear life. What will be life to me if you must die in the morning?"

"And do you suppose, General Fulton?" demanded Rory of the Hills, in indignant tones, "that, even to save my own life, I will allow this sweet girl of mine to wed your reprobate of a son?"

"My son is not a reprobate, robber; and if he were, he will be doing your daughter a great honor. The daughter of an outlaw, indeed, to refuse to wed my son. The girl is wise and you are mad. Come, girl, and save your father's life."

"Stay, Ellen!" cried the outlaw, as he seized the young girl's arm. "You must not marry this young scoundrell!"

"Release the girl on the instant!" yelled General Fulton, as he endeavored to drag Fannie away. "Ho—there—sentinel! confine the outlaw in the cell!"

"By Heavens, villain!" yelled Rory of the Hills, as he sprang forward, and seized the general by the throat with one hand while he grabbed his sword with the other, "but I'll not part with you so easy as that! If I am to die in the morning, I'll send you before me!"

General Fulton was a powerful man, and one well accustomed to desperate encounters in his early days, but he was no match for the stalwart, desperate outlaw.

Before the sentinel outside could respond to his officer's cry, Rory of the Hills had his foe on the ground, with one hand on his throat and the other holding the gleaming sword to his breast.

"Robber—madman!" gasped the alarmed general, as he encountered the glaring eyes above him. "Would you murder me?"

"Ay—and on the instant!" cried Rory, in furious tones. "Stand back there, fools, or your general is a dead man! All the troops in the garrison won't save him if you attempt to interfere! Now, General Fulton, I am going to make my terms!"

At the first outcry from their general, three soldiers, followed by young Captain Crawford, rushed into the dark passageway leading to the cells, where the light from the small lamp at the door only served to show them the forms on the ground, with the young girl standing behind them in apparent terror.

Captain Crawford's first thought was for his sister; and while the soldiers drew back on seeing the critical position of their general, the young officer beckoned to his sister, saying, in a voice that was not heard by the others:

"Slip out, Fannie, and into your own room with you. Not a word to a soul."

"Drag the wretch off!" yelled General Fulton, as he struggled in the grasp of Rory of the Hills, while the soldiers feared to approach, lest the outlaw should carry out his threat and plunge the sword into his enemy's heart. "Slay him! shoot him!"

"Raise a hand against me!" yelled Rory, as he brandished the sword aloft, while he turned to Captain Crawford and the soldiers, "and I will plunge this sword into his heart on the instant! Captain Crawford, are you a man of honor? Will you do me one favor, in return for having saved you yesterday?"

"Make no rash promises, Captain Crawford," yelled General Fulton. "Fear not for me, but shoot the wretch! Aha! what is that alarm cry I hear outside?"

"The outlaws are on us in force, General Fulton," cried Lord Craw-

ford, rushing into the prison passage, sword in hand. "They have scaled the walls, and over——"

Lord Crawford had just caught a glimpse of the struggling figures on the floor, and he turned to his son, crying:

"What means this, Edward?"

"It means, Lord Crawford," cried Rory of the Hills, in thrilling tones, "that I have this tyrant in a trap, and I will slay him as I would a wolf, unless he set my wife and daughter free! Hear to the sounds outside! Glory to my son and my brave followers! I knew they would not desert me!"

"To arms—to arms!" cried Lord Crawford, as the sounds of strife outside grew fiercer and fiercer. "Call out the whole garrison, my son, rescue your general at all hazards! Soldiers, cut down the outlaws!"

"Ay, cut me down if you can," cried Rory, as he sprang up, sword in hand. "I could never strike an unarmed foe, and I'll not stain my hand now. 'Tis thus I'll cleave my way to liberty. This way, son! This way, my brave men! Long live Ireland, and death to her foes! To the rescue—to the rescue!"

And Rory of the Hills rushed at the soldiers, striking right and left in the dim passage, until he gained the iron door leading to the great court outside, while the fierce cries resounding throughout the barracks told him that his daring followers were driving the surprised soldiers before them.

"Cowards—poltroons!" yelled General Fulton, as he sprang to his feet and seized the weapon of a soldier who had fallen by Rory's hand, while he dashed out after his enemy. "Beat to arms! Rally to repel the miscreants! A hundred crowns to the man who captures Rory of the Hills! He must die on the gallows!"

CHAPTER XIV.

YOUNG RORY TO HIS MEN—STORMING THE GARRISON—THE BATTLE AT NIGHT—YOUNG RORY BESET BY FOES—ANOTHER RESCUE PLANNED.

WHEN Ellen, the Maiden of the Mountain, started out from the garrison to seek her brave brother, and consult with him as to the best means of rescuing her father, she had no idea of the outlaws making a night attack on the strong English force at the town of Fethard, supported as it was by artillery and strong walls of defense.

Captain Crawford, when he assisted the young girl in escaping, had no idea of playing a treacherous part, as he was solely influenced by a desire to return a kindness to one in whom he had become deeply interested, and whose father had saved his life by an act of bravery that was only equalled by that of the brother, in rescuing his honored parent from a dreadful death in the cavern.

The young officer felt that young Rory of the Hills was brave even to rashness, and that his followers would follow him to the death in any attempt he would propose to rescue their adored leader; but Captain Crawford did not suppose that the mountaineers would make a night attack on the garrison, where over two thousand veteran troops were ready to receive them.

General Fulton despised the men of the hills so much that, notwithstanding the threats made by young Rory when he followed the captives to the town, he took no extra precautions to guard against surprise, trusting to the numbers and discipline of his troops to repel any rash attempt at rescue on the part of the outlaws.

Though Ellen was very anxious to rescue her father from the death that threatened him, she attempted to dissuade her young brother from attacking the garrison.

"Couldn't we invent some way of getting them clear, Rory?" she said, when she met her brother at the head of his bold followers, "without attacking the garrison. I knew a path into the town, by which a dozen or so could reach the garrison walls without being seen, and I know where father and mother are confined."

"The very thing we want, Ellen," replied her brother. "If a dozen can steal in that way on a dark night like this, there's no reason why all of us can't. 'Twould be only madness to try and get into the garrison with a dozen. They'd overpower us before we could do any good. Lead on, Ellen, in Heaven's name, and we'll make a bold stroke to free father and mother. If we can only surprise them before they can have time to muster, we'll succeed. Will you show us the way, good sister?"

"To be sure I will," Ellen replied. "If you are all silent and cautious, I will lead you to the garrison walls before the alarm will be sounded, and then——"

"Trust us for the rest, my good sister," said young Rory, as he turned to his devoted followers and commenced to address them, saying: "Halt, boys, for a few moments, till I speak a few words."

"Silence, and hear young Rory!" cried old Con Jackson, as the men were halted in a wood not a great distance from the town.

"I want to say to you, brave followers of my father," said young Rory, in a voice that was heard by all, "I want to impress on you that I am going to lead you on an enterprise of great danger."

"Lead on, my bold boy!" cried old Con Jackson, "and never fear that we won't follow you with hearts and pikes."

"I am going to lead you, brave men," continued young Rory, "against an enemy that's at least twice your number; but if we surprise them, half the battle will be won at the first dash. Are you all willing to follow me, to rescue your old leader and my father from a disgraceful death?"

"We'll follow you to death, if needs be, Rory!" cried old Con Jackson.

"To the death and glory!" cried another.

"We'll rescue Rory of the Hills!" cried another, "if half of us had to leave our dead bodies in the garrison!"

And murmurs of approval greeted the young chief on all sides, as the hardy mountaineers grasped their weapons, and asked to be led on to the assault.

"And now, my brave friends," said young Rory, as his heart was beating with hope and joy, "'tis very necessary that we move with caution. You will follow my sister here and myself as silently as if you were walking on the graves of the dead. It will be madness for us to attempt to hold the garrison, should we succeed in taking the place by surprise. We must rescue father and mother at all hazards, and then retreat together in good order, doing all the damage we can to the foe at the first onset, and before they get over their surprise. Our success depends on their surprise. Now, then, let us on, in Heaven's name, and strike a brave blow for Ireland and brave Rory of the Hills.

"For Ireland and brave Rory of the Hills," repeated his followers, in low voices, as they moved along through the wood, Rory and his sister leading the way.

"Dear Rory," said Ellen, after she had related the particulars of her escape from the garrison, "I pray you, should Captain Crawford fall in your way to-night, to spare his life. He has——"

"You needn't say any more, Ellen," interrupted young Rory, "I don't want to take his life, if I can help it; but the Lord have mercy on General Fulton if he comes before me to-night, for he's a born tyrant."

"Hush, now, Rory," cautioned Ellen, as she led the way through a narrow lane, with high walls on each side. "This lane leads out behind the garrison."

"Be as silent as the grave, men," cautioned young Rory, as he turned to his nearest followers. "Remember the word of attack will be: 'To the Rescue.'"

Moving along, like so many shadows in the night, the outlaws reached a secluded spot near the garrison, and without attracting the attention of the drowsy sentinels on the walls.

Forming his men in two bodies, young Rory addressed them once more in whispered tones as they grasped their weapons and prepared for the attack.

"Con Jackson, you are my father's oldest follower, and 'tis to you I confide this post of honor. I'll lead the first attack, while you wait here with half the men. If I fail, you will rush to my assistance, and push in to rescue father. If I succeed, you must cover our retreat, as we make back here with the captive. You stay here, Ellen, for I'll know how to find father and mother."

And the next moment the brave young fellow dashed out at the sentinels, followed by four hundred pikemen.

The outlaws had their guns slung over their shoulders, but they did not fire a shot, as they bore down on the surprised foe with the gleaming pikes.

One wild yell, cries of terror and agony on the part of the soldiers who fell at the onset, and the daring fellow, with his followers, were over the walls, carrying all before them.

"To the rescue—to the rescue!" cried the dashing young chap, as he gained the great courtyard, just as his father burst out from the prison passage, while the alarmed soldiers were gathering at the sound of the alarm drum and the cries of their officers.

"Heaven be praised!" cried the outlaw chief, recognizing his son's voice, and making a dash toward him. "Hurrah, boys, hurrah! I am at your head again. Follow me, till we rescue your mother and sister, Rory."

"Form into line, soldiers, and charge the daring wretches," cried General Fulton, while the alarm drums resounded through the garrison, as the soldiers rushed out from their quarters. "We must not allow a miscreant to escape. Form, men, form."

A hundred torches were flashing in the great yard at the moment, and Rory of the Hills could see that his enemies were gathering in force.

"Charge on them, my brave lads, before they have time to form," he cried, "while you, Rory, go seek your mother and sister yonder."

"Oh, husband—son!" exclaimed a voice from a barred window above. "I am up here, and you cannot reach me. Fly and save yourself. I will be safe. Fly—fly!"

"Mother—mother! I'll save you from the tyrant!" cried young Rory, as he dashed into the passage, while his father led the others against the soldiers.

"Guard the prisoner above there!" yelled General Fulton. "Steady, soldiers, steady, we'll meet them with the bayonet. Lord Crawford is forming in our rear."

Young Captain Crawford with some soldiers was guarding the passage to the guard room where the outlaw's wife was confined, when young Rory, followed by a dozen pikemen, sprang up the stairs to rescue his mother.

"Out of the way, Captain Crawford, said the young mountaineer, darting up, pike in hand. "I do not care to have your blood on my hands."

"I'll defend my post, young outlaw," returned Captain Crawford, in defiant tones, as he opposed the pike with his sword; "drive them back, soldiers!"

"Your death be on your own head, then!" cried Rory, as he rushed on the young officer and struck the sword from his hand. "I must rescue my mother. Burst open the door, men, and set my mother free. Captain Crawford, if you stir, I will send this pike through your body!"

"Oh, you cruel savage, would you kill my brother?" cried a voice behind him, as Fannie Crawford rushed forward to shield the young officer. "Oh, Edward—Edward, open the door and let the woman go free."

"Never!" cried the stubborn young officer, as he saw that the soldiers around him were fiercely contending with the outlaws before the guard room door. "Hear my brave father outside, Fannie; the rebels are giving way. We shall soon be victorious."

"Retreat, boys, retreat!" yelled Rory of the Hills in the court below, while the din of furious strife resounded on all sides. "Rory, my son, bring out your mother and sister."

At that moment young Rory, flinging Captain Crawford aside, burst in the door of the guard room, crying:

"Come out, mother, and let us away! Stand together there, men, and strike back the dogs that oppose us! Miss Crawford, I pledged my sister that I would spare your brother. Let him stand aside, if he would not fall by my hand."

"Let him pass, brother!" pleaded Fannie, as her brother blocked the passage from the guard room, while many soldiers were hastening to his assistance.

"He must not pass!" yelled a fierce voice behind her, as General Fulton sprang up the broad stairway, followed by a strong body of soldiers. "Seize the young villain, soldiers, and then we'll away in pursuit of his father. Look to the woman, and let her not escape. Down with the dogs there who offer resistance!"

Like a lion at bay young Rory stood in the guard room beside his mother, while the few faithful followers who were not in the desperate struggle on the stairs stood beside him.

"Oh, Rory—Rory!" cried his mother, as she saw General Fulton outside, with his soldiers thronging the passage, "why did you not make off with your father? That cruel man there will have no mercy on you!"

"Surrender, young hound!" cried General Fulton, "or you'll meet death before your foolish mother. Ha, ha, ha! father and son will die on the same gallows to-morrow!"

"Never!" cried young Rory, as he charged on the foe with his pike, crying out to his faithful followers at the same time: "One last charge

with me, boys, and we'll drive them before us. Follow me, mother, and we'll soon be with father!"

And the brave fellows did make a desperate charge, but it was impossible for them to force their way down the stairs against the strong force opposed to them.

After a desperate struggle, and when the daring young mountaineer had stretched several of the enemy on the stairs, he was overpowered by numbers and borne down, half a dozen of the soldiers springing at him with their bayonets.

"Oh, mercy, mercy!" cried Fannie Crawford, who had witnessed the unequal struggle with a throbbing heart. "You would not kill the brave young man, General Fulton?"

"Hold, then," cried the general, to his followers, while his eyes gleamed with malignant triumph. "Spare the young dog for the present; guard that woman, and we'll pursue the other hounds."

"God pity you, my brave boy," cried the outlaw's wife, as the soldiers dragged her back into the guard room. "Oh, why didn't you fly with your father?"

"My father has not fled, mother," cried young Rory, as the soldiers forced his arms behind him, and while the blood was streaming from his handsome face, from sword cuts received in the fight. "I'll never believe that he would desert us. If he lives, he will strike another blow for us."

"Away with him to the cell," cried General Fulton. "Captain Crawford, guard the prisoner on your life. 'I'll soon have his father in the cell with him. Here rides the cavalry. Now, to scatter the outlaw dogs, so that we will never hear of them again!"

And the stern general rushed down the stairs, to mount his charger, and ride with his forces in pursuit of the mountaineers, who were supposed to be retreating from the town in great disorder.

But Rory of the Hills was not flying in disorder—he was not retreating at all, as those in the garrison would soon learn to their cost.

When the gallant leader found himself at the head of only about four hundred of his followers, and in the heart of the enemy's stronghold, he was wise enough to foresee that it would be madness to hold the place against them, and led on by one of the best generals in the English army.

Feeling confident of being able to deal with the force then forming against him at the end of the great barrack yard, Rory charged on General Fulton with great fury, and drove the soldiers into the barracks without any serious loss on his side.

And then, feeling assured that young Rory had time to rescue his mother and sister in the meantime, the outlaw chief ordered a retreat.

At that moment a strong English force, led on by Lord Crawford, burst into the great square in front of the barracks, and Rory of the Hills was forced, along with his followers, over the walls and out into the woods, to cover his retreat or aid him in rescuing his wife or son.

As the night was very dark, the soldiers could not see which way the outlaws retreated; and General Fulton, thinking they had taken the direct road to the mountain, rode along the main road from the town at the head of a strong force of cavalry.

When Rory of the Hills reached the secluded woods outside the barracks, he learned for the first time that his daughter was free, and that he had over four hundred fresh men to aid him in any enterprise he proposed.

"Oh, father—father," said Ellen, as she embraced her parent in the wood, "I am rejoiced to see you. Where's mother—where's our brave Rory?"

"I fear they are both prisoners, Ellen," replied the outlaw, with a sigh.

And then his eye brightened, while he looked around at his followers, and as the clattering hoofs along the road told him of the false pursuit.

"But all is not lost, Ellen. The garrison will not dream of another surprise. I'll rescue them, as he rescued me. Prepare for another charge, my gallant men."

CHAPTER XV.

YOUNG RORY A CAPTIVE—A JOYFUL SURPRISE—A CRUEL INTERRUPTION
—YOUNG RORY FIGHTS A DUEL—THE SOUNDS OF STRIFE.

WHEN young Rory found himself in the prison cell from which his father had but recently escaped, he had some time to reflect on his position.

Though the hardy young fellow had received some severe cuts in the unequal struggle, they were not so serious as to disable him, or keep him from making an effort to escape should occasion offer him the chance.

Young Rory was not aware of his father being in the vicinity with the united band of outlaws, for he was under the impression that they had all retreated in haste before the overwhelming force brought against them by General Fulton; and he felt that, if he would escape a disgraceful death on the morrow, he must get out of the prison cell by stratagem.

Binding his wounds as well as he could with strips torn from the lining of his coat, young Rory set about examining the door of his cell.

"If I could only lay hands on the soldier out there," muttered the daring fellow, as he peered through the grating at the sentinel who marched to and fro in front of the cell. "I'd soon change clothes with him, and get out somehow. There's another chap taking his place now, and he isn't near as big. So much the better, if I can get at him at all."

Then Rory felt the door of his cell, and, to his great joy, he found that it had not been secured when he was thrust in by Captain Crawford and his men.

"Was this left open on purpose?" muttered Rory, as he watched the sentinel outside, while he prepared to open the door and spring out on the soldier. "Who knows but Captain Crawford wants to give me a chance for escape in return for my saving his father in the cave? If that is the case, 'twould be a pity to hurt the little soldier outside, for he must be in the plot. I'll just grab him by the throat, and drag him in here. Then I'll make him change clothes with me."

Rory waited until the sentinel's back was turned, and then he opened the door quietly, and sprang on him, seizing him by the throat with one hand, and grabbing his gun with the other, as he hissed into his ear:

"If you offer to cry aloud, my little fellow, you're a dead man. Come in here with me, until I take a loan of your coat and hat, though hang me if I know how I'll get them on."

The sentinel did not offer the slightest resistance, but allowed himself to be dragged into the cell by young Rory.

The young outlaw then drew the bayonet from the gun, and pointed it at his prisoner's heart, as he said:

"Now, my fine fellow, you are in my power, and I'm going to bind you and gag you in the bargain. Off with that hat of yours, and then off with your coat. Holy Father! what's this at all?"

As Rory spoke, he pulled the hat from the young soldier's head, when, to his astonishment, a mass of splendid hair fell down over the shoulders of the captive, whose face was averted and turned from the dim light that came in through the grating of the door.

"Heavens alive!" exclaimed young Rory, as he turned the averted face toward him, while his heart was beating wildly; "who and what are you?"

"You are very cruel, sir, to treat me in this way," replied a soft voice, that thrilled to his very soul.

"Gracious Heaven! if it isn't Miss Fannie Crawford!" muttered the young man, as he released his grasp on the prisoner, and drew back.

"Oh, I ask a thousand pardons, my dear young lady. May my hand be struck dead this moment if I'd raise it against you, if I knew you. But what in the world put you up to putting on them clothes, and come here as sentry over me?"

The blushing girl was silent for a moment; and when she did respond to the question, her voice trembled with emotion as she inquired:

"And you can ask me such a question, you young savage? I came here to watch you, and see that you could not escape, so that I would have the pleasure of seeing you dangling from the gallows in the morning."

"I don't believe a word of it, my dear young lady," said Rory, as he seized the young girl's hand and pressed it within his own. "You came here, I'll swear, because you pitied the poor young savage who was to die at daybreak. You came here, I'll swear, to help me to escape."

"And if I did, you gave me a very nice reception, indeed," said the pouting girl. "You almost choked me, sir."

"On my faith, my dear lady," said the young mountaineer, "but I'd cut my hand off if I had a notion 'twas you, before I'd touch your

darling throat. Oh, for the love of Heaven, you don't think I'm such a savage as that! Oh, Miss Fannie, 'tis I wouldn't——"

"Never mind that now," interrupted the young girl.

"But I must mind; I must tell you how I can't thank you for the way you helped Ellen to escape. She told me all about it, Miss Fannie. Oh, if I was to live a hundred years I'll not forget your brave act, in taking her place, my good young lady. How did you get on with General Fulton at all. What did he say when he found out?"

"He did not find it out at all," replied Fannie, with a pleasant smile. "He thought I was your sister all the time; and do you know what he proposed?"

"To marry you himself, maybe," replied the young fellow. "I know he has a purpose in doing something of the kind, if he thought he was dealing with my sister Ellen. You know, if we weren't outlaws, we're entitled to the great estate he now holds wrongfully, for it belongs by right to my mother."

"He didn't ask me to marry him," responded Fannie, with another arch smile, "but he wanted me to marry his son."

"His son!" exclaimed Rory, with evident disgust. "You or my sister marry the greatest young rake in the country, by all odds! Oh, surely, Miss Fannie, you wouldn't have carried the joke so far! I heard that he was in love with you. You surely don't care for such a scamp?"

"He's a very handsome young officer, sir," replied Fannie, "but I'll not answer your question now. How are you to escape from here? I am so thankful to you for saving father's life, that I am willing to help you, young savage that you are."

"Ah, Miss Fannie—Miss Fannie," said the brave young fellow, with great emotion, as he pressed the young girl's hand in his own, "you don't mean that. I may be a young savage, but I have the heart of a man and of a gentleman for all that, and you can never know how warmly that heart beats for a certain young lady who despises me. Oh, if I wasn't a wild outlaw—if I only had the fortune and place that is my birthright, I'd show you that I could be a true gentleman, indeed. But, as I am only a poor wretch—an outcast—I will only tell you that you'll never meet one who loves you with a nobler love than I do, my dear lady. If I am to die——"

"You are not going to die, Rory," interrupted Fannie, as a shudder passed over her frame, while she pressed the hand of her lover. "'Tis to save you that I came here in this disguise. My good brother loves your sister, and he is anxious that you should escape. General Fulton is now away in pursuit of your father. You must escape before he returns."

"I don't care to escape, Miss Fannie," replied the young man, "if I lose you forever. Oh, is there any hope at all for me, say you? I will win a name yet that you will be proud of! If I get out of this we will all away to France, and then I'll have a glorious chance for honor and for fortune. Could it be possible that you'd ever think of me as your husband? Surely you'll not marry that young rascal, Captain Fulton."

"Oh, no, no!" replied the young girl, with a shudder. "I'll never think of that, Rory."

"And then you'll have me—won't you, my darling?" asked the young mountaineer, as he drew the charming girl toward him and imprinted a kiss on her willing lips. "You do care for me, don't you?"

"I do—I do, Rory!" was the fervent reply, as Fannie embraced her young lover. "I will share your fortunes, Rory—I will be your bride."

"Oh, Heavens alive!" exclaimed the enraptured young outlaw, as he pressed the loving girl to his breast; "this is more joy than I ever bargained for! Is it a dream at all? To think that you are fond of me, my darling girl! And will you fly with me this moment, my dear one?"

"Yes, yes, Rory! My father wants me to marry Captain Fulton, but I hate the sight of him! We will escape out together, and we'll find two horses ready for us in the wood. I will fly with you to the mountain, Rory! I will desert father and brother for your sake! Let us steal out now, and——"

"Not so fast, young lady!" cried a passionate voice outside the cell door. "I will stop your flight."

The next moment the door was burst in and a young officer stood before the surprised lovers, holding a sword in his hand as he gazed at the pair with angry eyes.

Young Rory sprang back on the instant, and his bayonet was presented to the other's sword as he said:

"We are betrayed, Miss Fannie! I can only die bravely now."

"You'll die by my hand, you scoundrel!" cried the young officer, as he advanced on Rory with his sword. "Know you who I am?"

"'Tis Captain Fulton, Rory," whispered Fannie, as she clung to her lover. "Oh, we are lost, Rory—we are lost!"

"Your vile lover is lost, Fannie Crawford!" said the young officer, in harsh tones, as he glared at his rival; "but you are saved—saved to be my bride! I will now kill him before your eyes, and I will force you to wed me, or I will publish your story to the world. What a nice story 'twill be for the mess room—the daughter of Lord Crawford, in the garb of a soldier, found in the cell of the young rascal of an outlaw! And now, villain, receive my weapon in your vile heart!"

"Stand aside, my loved one," cried Rory, as he parried a thrust aimed at him by his indignant assailant. "Stand aside till I show this young hound that he will not live to insult you again!"

Captain Fulton had left the cell door open when he burst in on the lovers, and Rory could see a file of soldiers drawn up outside, barring his escape that way.

With a pale face and a beating heart Fannie Crawford retired to a corner of the cell and watched the combat, with which the soldiers outside, who had received their orders from their officer, did not interfere.

"If I kill him," thought young Rory, as he parried the fierce thrusts made at him by his angry rival, "is there any chance at all of my fighting my way out through the soldiers? By Heaven, but I'll die bravely, anyhow! Hang me if this chap don't handle his sword well!"

Yes, Captain Fulton did handle his sword well, for the general's son was considered the ablest swordsman in the garrison, and he had been engaged in many hand to hand duels, in all of which he had either slain or wounded his opponents.

"Bring torches, soldiers!" cried the young officer, as he found himself forced toward the door, "until I can see the way to this young viper's heart! Don't attempt to enter until I kill him!"

"That you'll never do, you scoundrel!" cried Rory, as he pressed on his assailant with the bayonet. "Would to Heaven my life depended on slaying you! Would to goodness I only had two like you to fight against for life and liberty!"

"You fight well, outlaw!" cried the young officer, as he parried the fierce lunges made at him by young Rory, "but you fight in vain. I have been only playing with you, for know you that I am the best swordsman in the garrison. I will hack you limb from limb ere I drive my good sword through your heart! How do you like that, you vile rascal?"

As the young officer uttered the last sentence he made a quick, desperate lunge at young Rory, who had stumbled over the gun lying on the floor at the instant, and who could not recover himself in time to avoid the sword.

Fannie Crawford uttered a cry of agony as she saw her lover staggering back with the blood spouting from a wound in his cheek, and she cried:

"Oh, you are not a true gentleman, Captain Fulton! You do not fight with equal weapons. Your sword is three inches longer than his weapon!"

"A sword here!" cried the confident duelist to the soldiers outside, who were now holding torches to illuminate the scene.

"Never mind a sword for me!" cried young Rory, recovering from the shock of the wound and crossing weapons with his skillful antagonist again. "If I can't beat you with this bayonet, young sir, I deserve to fall by your hand. Halloo! Now we are even again. That's what I call tit for tat, booster!"

Captain Fulton uttered a cry of rage as he felt the bayonet point penetrating his cheek, and then uttering a fearful oath, he forced the fighting.

The soldiers outside peered in at the desperate combatants without uttering a word, while Fannie Crawford, her heart beating wildly, prayed for the success of her lover, though she knew that it would be almost impossible for him to escape, even though he should succeed in slaying the expert swordsman with whom he was struggling.

For fully five minutes young Rory maintained the struggle, baffling all the efforts of his cunning antagonist, who was growing more and more furious as he found that he had to deal with one

who was fully his match in strength and skill, even when using a weapon that was so much inferior to his own.

"Here's another one for you, to spoil your beauty," said Rory, with great glee, as he touched his rival's other cheek with the point of the bayonet. "Faith, but 'tis well for you I haven't a sword, or I'd soon finish you, my brave buck."

"Thunder and perdition," roared the infuriated young officer, as he slashed at Rory in a desperate manner; "but I'll split you all over for that. Eternal furies seize him, he has disarmed me!"

"And you are my prisoner, at that," yelled Rory, as he held his weapon to the young officer's heart. "Stir a step outside there to save him, and I'll plunge my bayonet into his heart."

At that moment, a wild clamor burst out on the walls of the garrison, followed by shouts and shots.

"Hear that, will you?" yelled young Rory, as his eyes flashed with joy and hope. "That's the music for me this morning. Miss Fannie, my darling, my father is at them outside. We are saved, my sweet one—we are saved!"

"Shoot the scoundrel down, men," yelled Captain Fulton. "Don't allow him to escape with the young lady. Where's Captatn Crawford? Defend your prisoner to the death."

"Defend yourselves, soldiers," said Fannie's brother, as he rushed into the passage, sword in hand. "The outlaws are on us in force!"

"Hurrah for my brave father," cried young Rory, as he flung Captain Fulton against the side of the cell, and drew the door in the face of the soldiers. "Take up his sword my dear girl and hold it at his throat, while I defend the door. Hear them—hear them? They are coming nearer and nearer every minute. My dear mother will be set free also. We'll away to the mountain together, and you'll be my wife."

The devoted young girl seized the sword so recently used against her lover, and sprang on the prostrate young officer, crying:

"If you offer to stir, Captain Fulton, I'll take your life. Hold the door, dear Rory, and I will away with you when your friends come to our rescue. Oh, thank Heaven for this happy diversion."

"Thank Heaven, indeed," cried young Rory, as he listened to the sounds of combat outside. "Would that I could be out fighting with them, my darling; but I'll be. Here they come! Stand where you are, and I'll soon be with you again."

And young Rory, bayonet in hand, dashed out at the soldiers, while his father appeared at the door at the same moment.

"Hurrah, father, hurrah!" cried the young mountaineer, as he cut right and left at the soldiers. "This is a brave night's work, and no mistake."

"A glorious night's work, my son," responded Rory of the Hills, cutting down a soldier who opposed his passage. "We'll show them what the outlaws of the hills can do. Where's your mother confined?"

"In the guard room above, sir," replied the young man, as he fought his way to his father. "You go up and save her, while I see to some one else."

CHAPTER XVI.

FANNIE ON GUARD—HER OLD LOVER'S THREAT—RORY TO THE RESCUE—FIGHTING TO THE WOOD—FOES IN FRONT AND REAR.

WHILE the battle was raging with great fury, Fannie Crawford stood over her old suitor, holding the sword to his breast as she cried:

"Don't offer to stir, Captain Fulton, or I'll be compelled to slay you."

The cunning man did not reply to this threat, but remained perfectly still, as if stunned by the shock received at the hands of his rival.

"Can he be dead?" muttered Fannie, as she listened to the sounds of the conflict, where the voice of her lover arose above the din, as he cheered on the outlaws, who were now fighting their way to the guard room, where his mother was still confined.

"Dear me, but this is very dreadful," Fannie continued to mutter; "to think of the dear fellow having to fight against my brother. This wretch must be dead."

The wretch was not dead, but he was waiting his opportunity to spring at and disarm the brave girl.

And that opportunity was now offered him through Fannie's anxiety for her lover and her brother.

"I can't stand this suspense any longer," muttered the brave girl,

as she took another look at the prostrate man, and then turned to the door. "He's either dead or insensible, and I must go out to see how the dreadful struggle is going on."

Quick as a flash Captain Fulton was on his feet, and sprang on the young girl before she could reach the door, as he cried, in passionate tones, while he dragged the sword from her hands:

"It is my turn now, thou false girl—thou traitress!"

"Mercy—would you murder me, Captain Fulton?" cried Fannie, as she encountered the furious look on the face of her discarded lover.

"And I would serve you justly if I did, traitress; but I will spare your life on one condition—I will hide your treacherous conduct from my father, and you make me but a solemn promise."

"What will I promise you, Captain Fulton?" inquired the young girl, as she trembled with fear.

"Promise to be my bride in the morning, false one!"

"Never—I would die first!" cried Fannie, indignantly, as she attempted to break away from the strong man's grasp. "Help, Rory—help, brother! The wretch will slay me. Save me—save me!"

"They cannot save you unless you swear to be mine!" cried the angry man, as he held the weapon to the young girl's breast. "Hark! They are retreating now—the dogs! Swear to be mine, or I will send this steel to your treacherous heart—thou false traitress!"

"Help!—mercy!—save me!" cried the terrified creature, as she saw the murderous gleam in the man's face.

"They hear you not. The wretch is flying for his life, if he is not slain!" cried Captain Fulton, as he dragged the girl back in the cell.

"Come out to me, Fannie, my darling," cried Rory, as he dashed into the passage, his face begrimed with smoke and blood. "We have rescued my mother, and we are off. Heaven!—you villain!—would you kill the sweet girl? Take that, and the foul fiends take you."

And Rory made a dash into the cell, struck down the sword that was raised against the girl he loved, and then plunged the bayonet into Captain Fulton's left arm, who had raised it to shield his breast from the fierce thrust made at him by the infuriated young outlaw.

"Away with me, my darling," cried young Rory, as he hurled the wounded man to the floor, and seized the young girl's hand. "Away with me on the instant, for General Fulton is back on us with all his force, and we'll have to retreat as fast as we can. Come, my darling, and share my mountain home with me."

"I will, Rory—I will," cried the infatuated girl, as she left the cell with her lover.

"Haste, Rory—haste!" cried the old outlaw, as he rushed into the passage, followed by a dozen of his band. "What prisoner is that you have? Heavens alive, if it isn't a young girl in the clothes of a soldier! Surely, 'tis Lord Crawford's daughter, my son! Where is she going? Is she your prisoner again?"

"And forever, father!" replied the happy young fellow, as he passed out, still holding his willing prisoner by the hand, as he struck at the soldiers who endeavored to bar his flight.

"Fight your way through them, my brave lads!" cried Rory of the Hills, as he sprang to assist his gallant young son. "Once outside, we are all safe in the road. Rally around me, brave men of the hills. One bold rush together, and we are free again!"

"Hurrah for young Rory and the purty girl of his heart!" yelled old Con Jackson, as he sprang to guard the faithful pair. "Down with the hounds who oppose us, boys!"

"Down with them?" yelled old Rory, as he struck right and left. "Thank God, your mother is safe outside, Rory! Away with you and the girl, now; there's a clear passage for you!"

The outlaws rallied around their chief, and forced a passage through the soldiers, until they gained the main gate of the garrison.

"Pursue the scoundrels!" yelled Captain Fulton, as he seized a sword from the grasp of a fellow officer and dashed after the retreating outlaws, as they hastened toward the wood. "Oh, you are cowards if they escape! Charge after them, but do not fire, or you may hit the lady!"

"Retreat at the double quick!" cried Rory of the Hills, as his band reached the wood; "push on, Rory, with the women, while I defend you behind here, for here come the horsemen after us. Stand together boys, if they come on us."

"What's all this uproar about?" cried General Fulton, as he rode down to the barracks at the head of his regiment, where his wounded

son was forming the soldiers for a charge after the retreating outlaws.

"Have those scoundrels dared to attack the garrison again, sir?"

"They have, father," replied Captain Fulton, as he pointed to the wood. "They have carried off the prisoners and Miss Crawford. They cannot escape, if we dash in at them. Will I charge them, sir?"

"Yes—yes," responded the wily general, as he turned to the mounted troop. "Summon all the forces in the garrison, and into the woods after them with the foot soldiers, Lord Crawford. I will ride around, and intercept them as they emerge from the wood. We must not allow one of the scoundrels to escape."

"You say my daughter is a prisoner, Captain Fulton?" inquired Lord Crawford.

"She is a willing prisoner, sir," whispered Captain Fulton in reply. "She has fled with the young outlaw, son of Rory of the Hills. Lord Crawford."

"Fled with young Rory," gasped the distracted father. "Can this be possible, sir? My proud daughter—"

"Your proud daughter is madly in love with the wild outlaw, Lord Crawford," said Captain Fulton, in the same low voice, "and she will be his wife ere another day passes, unless we rescue her."

"Follow me to the rescue, then," said Lord Crawford, as he took his place at the head of the column. "Help me to rescue my child from such disgrace, and she will be your bride. Into the wood, soldiers, and at the outlaws with the bayonet. Do not fire a shot."

A loud cheer burst from the soldiers as they charged into the wood; and at the same moment the clatter of hoofs along the road told the retreating outlaws that they would have to encounter enemies in front as well as in the rear.

"The horsemen are riding around to cut us off, Rory," cried the old outlaw, as he gained his son's side. "What do you think will be the best way to avoid them? We can't fight them all, for they are three to one against us."

Rory looked at the beautiful girl at his side, who was talking to his sister, as he replied:

"If it wasn't for those we love so well, father, I'd admire breaking through the horsemen and making for the hills in scattered parties. What do you think of trying it, sir?"

"Twill never do to be caught between the two bodies, my son. Let us push on, in God's name, and have at the horsemen. We'll give them one glorious charge and break through them. Altogether, men, as fast as you can, on your lives. Fight, boys, now, as you never fought before. Load all your guns and send one volley at the horsemen before we're out on them with the pikes."

"Silence, all," said young Rory, as he led the women into the center of the gallant band. "We may surprise them, if we are careful. Miss Fannie, if I should fall, remember I'll die blessing you, my dear darling."

"Is there no way of escaping without fighting, dear Rory?" inquired the trembling girl, as she pressed her lover's hand. "We have had so much bloodshed already."

"There's no other way, I'm afraid, my darling. Hark! they're pressing on behind us now. We must burst out on the horsemen. Keep still, here, a moment, all of you, till we open a passage through the horsemen, and then rush out to us. Now for it."

And the brave young fellow left those he loved under a tree, as he sprang forward to lead his band to victory or a crushing defeat.

CHAPTER XVII.

YOUNG RORY IS HAPPY—THE BURSTING CHARGE ON THE CAVALRY—TWO GENERALS IN A RAGE—IN FIERCE PURSUIT AGAIN.

RORY OF THE HILLS was an old campaigner, and he had served under one of the best generals who ever drew sword for fatherland.

Knowing full well, therefore, that it would be impossible for an inferior force to withstand a combined attack in front and rear, he determined on hazarding a vigorous charge on the cavalry in front, in the hope of bursting through them without serious loss, and then escaping to his mountain retreats.

As the English force on foot in the rear was pushing after him at a double quick, it would be necessary for the outlaw chief to form his men on the skirt of the wood as quick as possible, send one volley into the cavalry, and then dash out with the pikes.

But there was one objection to this mode of action, and it was a serious one.

To break through and disorganize a regiment of cavalry was not a

very desperate undertaking for men who were in a desperate plight, and who were accustomed to such work for years.

But it would not be such an easy matter for the outlaws to bear the wounded along with them.

And that was what troubled Rory of the Hills, as he drew up his men in battle array on the skirt of the wood.

"Why do you hesitate to charge, father?" inquired young Rory, who was burning with impatience, as he could now hear the cries of the pursuers in their rear draw closer and closer on them. "They'll be on us behind before we can beat them in front, sir."

"That's what troubles me, my son," replied the old chief, as he cast a glance at the spot where the women were standing. "You must not charge out with us, Rory."

"What must I do, then, father?" inquired the disappointed youth.

"You must take twenty of the men, and move to the left at once, as gently as possible, with the ladies in your midst, while I dash out here in front with the rest of the force here. Quick, my son; and get up to the hills as best you can. Guard your mother and sister as you would your honor. They must not fall into General Fulton's hands again—the tyrant. Away with you, and may Heaven guard and prosper you."

Young Rory did not pause a moment, save to press his father's hand; and then, calling on twenty of the men nearest him, he hastened to the spot where the three anxious women were in waiting, saying:

"Come with me mother, sister, and you, Miss Fannie. We must steal out this way. Quick, and not a word. Be as silent as death, for our lives depend on it."

Without uttering a word the three women placed themselves under Rory's directions, moved on in the direction intimated, and then made all speed to gain the side exit from the wood, where a path led up to the mountain.

"We are not a moment too soon, my darling," whispered the young man to Fannie Crawford, as loud shouts were heard in the direction of the place they had just left. "Oh, but you are very kind to fly with me."

"They are fighting, Rory, my son—they are at the terrible work again," said his mother, as a deafening discharge of musketry fell on their ears. "Oh, my poor, brave husband, what dangers you have to encounter."

"Hear that cry, mother!" returned Rory, as a wild, defiant shout burst out on the night air. "Our lads are at the horsemen now with the pikes! Hurry on—hurry on!"

Yes, Rory of the Hills and his gallant followers were at the horsemen with a vengeance and a half.

The old chief only waited to see his son away, when he peeped through the trees at the edge of the wood, in order to reconnoiter the horsemen, who were drawn up outside in a large open field.

"'Tis time to be at them," he muttered, as he listened to the shouts of those who were tracking them in the rear. "Out at them, men, in Heaven's name! One volley, and then at the horsemen with the pikes! Present—fire!"

And Rory of the Hills, at the head of his daring followers, dashed to the open space outside, sending a volley at the horsemen at the same moment.

Before the smoke from the guns had lifted, the Irish pikemen were in on the English horsemen, uttering their warlike cries, as they bore at them with their telling weapons.

"Charge!" yelled General Fulton, who commanded the cavalry. "Cut the dogs to pieces, men! Close in—close in!"

And it was necessary for the men to close in, as fully a hundred of their number fell at the fire of the outlaws.

"Down with the tyrants!" yelled Rory of the Hills, as he dashed at the foremost of the troopers. "Spare the horses, and mount as fast as you slay a foe. Hurrah, men, hurrah!"

And another wild shout rang out as the foes closed in deadly conflict.

Then it was bloody work in earnest.

The active pikemen, with their long weapons, were more than able for horsemen with their sabers, as the former could spring aside to avoid the blows aimed at them, while the soldiers could not manage their horses with that ease that would allow them to escape the terrible pikes.

Rory of the Hills tried to single out General Fulton at the outset,

but the outlaw chief was set on by a huge horseman, mounted on a great black charger, who was recognized in the regiment as the most powerful arm in the garrison.

"I'll cleave you to the waist!" yelled the English trooper, as he spurred his great charger at Rory, and held his saber uplifted to strike.

Rory saw the horseman making at him, and he was on his guard.

Waiting until his foe was in striking distance, the ever active mountaineer sprang suddenly aside, and the big horseman cut through the air only.

Before the man could wheel his horse to renew the fight, Rory thrust a pike in his side, and hurled him from his steed.

"That settles you, boaster!" cried the outlaw chief, as he sprang on the prostrate man, dragged his sword from his powerless hand, and then sprang on the big charger.

"At them, men, with a vengeance!" he cried again, as he forced the great horse in among the troopers, cutting right and left the while. "Hurrah—hurrah! They're giving way!"

"Steady, there!" cried General Fulton, as he saw that the horsemen were breaking and flying in disorder before the fierce mountaineers and their terrible pikes. "Reinforcements are at hand, and we'll crush the villains soon."

"Villain to you, General Fulton!" yelled Rory, as he dashed at the stern general. "Defend yourself, if you dare!"

"I defy you to the death, outlaw!" replied the brave general, as he spurred his horse to the encounter. "Rally, soldiers, rally! Succor is at hand."

"And too late to succor you, tyrant!" cried the outlaw chief, as he struck the merciless man on the breast with the slain giant's saber, sending him reeling from his spirited charger. "Away, men, away! The road is now open. Mount all of you that can catch the horses. The dogs behind are on us."

"A fine night's work, be all that's holy!" said old Con Jackson, springing on the splendid charger, lately ridden by General Fulton. "This will make a fine horse for you in France, my brave Rory."

"Away, away!" again cried the outlaw chief, as the cries of the footmen in the rear told him that more foes were on them.

The battle, so far as the cavalry of the enemy was concerned, was then over, and there was not a single foe to oppose them in front.

At the first onset the headlong mountaineers threw the horsemen into confusion; and then it became a hand to hand battle, wherein the discipline or the numbers of the troopers could have no chance as against the active and daring mountaineers, with their long pikes, and fighting under one who had so long led them to victory.

Before the infantry could reach the edge of the wood, fully four hundred of the horsemen were either slain or disabled, and the others were dashing away in disorder, seeking to reach the shelter of the garrison.

The outlaws, acting under the command of their chief, seized as many of the troopers' horses as possible; and those who could not procure a prize were ordered to beat a hasty retreat, keeping together in fair order, while the mounted men were kept behind, to repel any attack that might be made by another party of horsemen from the garrison.

When the English body of foot soldiers burst out of the wood, the outlaws were in full retreat across the fields leading to the mountain.

Lord Crawford was in command of the infantry, and when he looked on the field of battle, and saw hundreds of dead and wounded horsemen lying around, he burst out into a fit of rage, crying:

"On the honor of a soldier, this must be avenged."

"It will be avenged, Lord Crawford," said a voice in front of him, as a form arose from the ground.

"And how did it happen, General Fulton?" inquired Lord Crawford, as he advanced to meet his baffled brother-in-arms. "Are you wounded, general?"

"At the heart, Lord Crawford. Oh, curse the cowardly dogs, to think that they should give way before a set of undisciplined devils from the mountains! Pursue them, Lord Crawford. I will after you with the whole force at my command. I will crush that outlaw, if I have to call on every soldier in the province!"

"Know you, sir," said Captain Fulton, as he stepped up to Lord Crawford, "that your daughter has fled with the young rebel—the son of Rory of the Hills?"

"My daughter fled with the son of Rory of the Hills!" exclaimed the astonished man. "'Tis too ridiculous, Captain Fulton."

"'Tis too true, father," said his son. "We must pursue them at all hazards. Fannie has either fled, or she has been taken off as a prisoner."

"Oh, this is fearful news, indeed!" cried Lord Crawford. "Advance, men, on the double quick, and we will pursue the villains."

"Sound a recall for some of those cowardly horsemen," cried Captain Fulton, "and I will rescue your daughter, and punish the young outlaw, sir. I sent but fifty men to intercept them, for I have just learned that young Rory, with a small party, is escorting the robber's family and Miss Fannie through the road by another path. General Fulton, have I your permission to pursue them?"

"Yes—yes!" cried the army general. "Away, and lose no time. We will pursue the main body with all the force we can muster."

"Captain Fulton," said Lord Crawford, as he drew the young officer aside, and spoke in low tones, "I believe you love my daughter."

"With all my soul, sir," was the earnest reply from the young profligate.

"Rescue her, and she will be your wife on the day after, if I have to drag her to the church with my own hands."

"I will, Lord Crawford—I will," cried the young officer. "I'll away as soon as I can get fifty troopers at my command."

"A moment here, Captain Fulton," cried his stern father.

"I am at your service, general," said the young man, as he saluted his father, and then approached him.

"Did you ever see this young woman, who is the daughter of the man known as Rory of the Hills, sir?" inquired the general, as he, in turn, drew his son aside.

"Yes, sir, I saw her to-night, when she was a prisoner."

"I want you to capture that young woman, this morning, at all hazards, and also her mother—the outlaw's wife."

"I will do my utmost, general, you may be sure," responded the young profligate, wondering why his father was so much interested in the capture of the outlaw's wife and daughter.

"I want you, sir," continued the stern general, "to slay that young outlaw—the son of Rory of the Hills. Remember, don't spare him, even though he should call for quarter."

"You may be certain I will not, father," replied the son, as he remembered the encounter in the cell, when he suffered a disgraceful defeat at the hands of the young outlaw. "I hate the rascal now."

"One word more, sir," continued the intriguing general, as he held his impatient son by the arm. "I desire you to show all due courtesy to the outlaw's wife and daughter."

"And why, father?" the young man ventured to ask, surprised at the command from one who was never noted for his courtesy to prisoners, whether male or female.

"For the best of reasons, sir," was the prompt reply. "The outlaw's wife is my half sister. She is the legal owner of the estate we now hold, and——"

"You surprise me, father," interrupted the astonished young man.

"Don't interrupt me, sir, for we have no time to waste. What is more, I intend that the young lady shall be your wife."

"My wife, sir. I—to marry the daughter of an outlaw!"

"You must wed her, sir, or I will cast you out without a shilling. Go and rescue her. She will be your wife."

"Gracious Heaven!" muttered young Captain Crawford, who was near enough to overhear the interview between father and son, "this is news, indeed. Ellen is an heiress, and entitled to the estate General Fulton now holds. She must marry that profligate, indeed! I will baffle that intrigue, or I will kill the young debauchee. I must volunteer on this enterprise, and protect dear Ellen. I loved her when I thought she was a penniless outlaw's daughter, and I do not seek her now for her wealth, but I will protect her against that wretch with my life."

In less than five minutes after, the two young rivals for the hand of the outlaw's daughter were riding away at the head of fifty troopers, while General Fulton, accompanied by Lord Crawford, led a strong force in pursuit of the main body of outlaws.

And we must now follow the young outlaw's adventures, for we know that great perils were pursuing him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOVE'S DREAMINGS—THE DARK SHADOWS—THE PURSUIT—BEHIND THE STONE WALL—ANOTHER ENCOUNTER BETWEEN FOES.

If Fannie Crawford had any regrets at leaving her father and brother to share the fortunes of the young outlaw, the brave girl did not exhibit them, for she tripped along gayly beside young Rory, while the outlaw's mother and sister followed them.

Fannie was still attired in the disguise she had assumed when she played sentinel at the cell door, with the purpose of rescuing the "young savage" who had stolen her heart—or rather carried it by storm—on the wild mountain side.

Ellen and her mother, realizing the situation of the young pair, left them to walk together undisturbed, and young Rory, as he looked at the beautiful creature whose arm was resting on his own, and heard the sweet voice, that had before chided him in such harsh terms, now speaking in loving tones, felt that it was the happiest moment of his life.

What did that hopeful young spirit care for the dangers that threatened him?

Was not the girl of his heart at his side, marching hand in hand with him to the mountain retreat, and would she not be his bonny bride at a very early day?

Then young Rory thought of the future, and, oh! the glorious pictures he painted in his bright imagination.

In his fancy he was serving with the Irish Brigade in the French service, and charging against the old English foe on the plains of Flanders.

Then he would be receiving honors and rewards from the great French commander, and bearing his honors to his loving bride.

"Oh, Fannie—Fannie, my darling," he whispered, as he pressed the fond girl's hand, "I never dreamt of such joy as this. And don't you regret coming with me?"

"No—no, dear Rory," was the loving reply. "I will share your fortunes, for good or ill, and never repine. I hated you when I first met you at the pass, for I thought you were a wild savage; but when I saw your noble action in rescuing my father my heart turned to you at once."

"My father, darling," said Rory, "has made all ready to sail away to France, and he only needed some more gold to take all his followers with him. I think I know, now, where I can——"

"I have a large fortune in my own right, dear Rory," interrupted the devoted girl, "and you must have it. Father and brother cannot keep it from me. It is my husband's, and——"

"Here we are at the end of the wood, my dear one," said Rory. "I will go out and see if the coast is clear. Father must have fought his way through the horsemen, mother, for I do not hear any sounds of strife."

"May Heaven send he's safe and victorious," muttered the outlaw's wife.

"Of course he's victorious, mother," said Rory, as he sprang out in the clearing and looked toward the battle field. "I don't see any signs of strife, and there goes a body of men moving to the left toward the mountains. Let us cross the fields at once and gain the mountain."

Out from the wood sallied the little party, and still young Rory's keen eyes were fixed on the late battle field.

"There's something moving about there," he muttered, as the dark mass of infantry formed at the edge of the wood. "'Tis the foot soldiers that were after us in the wood, and they were not in time to help the horsemen."

"Rory—Rory," cried his sister, who had the keen eye of a mountain girl, "I see some objects moving along this way at the edge of the wood."

"Quick—quick!" cried the young man, in some alarm, as he peered through the gloom of the night. "Get across the fields and up to the mountain as fast as possible."

And Rory pressed forward, assisting his loved companion in the flight, while he turned his eyes toward the moving objects every now and again, as if striving to make out some of the foes who were riding after him.

"You are not afraid, are you, darling?" inquired young Rory, as he felt the young girl's hand tremble on his arm.

"Not for myself, Rory, but I would not care to live if anything happened to you."

"Don't worry about that, Fannie. Hurry on, good mother. Help mother along, boys. Those fellows are nearing us. Oh, would that we were in the mountains, and then we'd defy them!"

"I'm afraid we'll have to stand and fight, Master Rory," said one of the men of the escort, who sprang forward to assist the outlaw's wife. "Wouldn't it be better to let the ladies push ahead, while we make a stand behind this wall here?"

"A good suggestion, Regan," replied Rory, as he saw that the body of horsemen were rapidly gaining on them. "Go, on, mother, with the girls, and we'll make a stand here."

"No—no—no!" cried Fannie, as she clung to her lover's arm. "I will stay here with you and see the worst."

"So will I, Rory," said his mother, in firm tones. "This stone wall will give us shelter, and I will not leave you."

"I will remain also," said the brave Ellen, climbing over the stone wall. "I wish I had a gun to help you."

"Oh, Ellen," said Fannie, as the two girls crouched down behind the wall with the outlaw's wife, "is it not a fearful thing to think that my brother may be with those who are coming, and that he may fall by your brother's hand?"

"Better than that my noble brother should fall by his hand," replied Ellen. "War is a cruel business, anyway."

"Halt there!" cried young Rory, who had drawn up his men behind the stone wall, with their guns projecting towards the advancing horsemen. "Who are you?"

"Soldiers of King George," replied Captain Fulton, in arrogant tones. "Surrender, rebels, or we will show you no mercy."

"We ask none, you minion of a foreign king," cried young Rory, as he aimed at the young officer; "but your blood will be on your own head if you advance further."

"Forward—charge!" yelled Captain Fulton, as he fired a pistol at Rory, who stood up behind the wall so that his head and breast were visible.

Young Rory fired on the instant, calling out to his followers:

"Fire, men, and then prepare to repel them with the pikes."

A loud volley rang out, followed by yells of pain, and half a dozen horses scampered over the field without riders.

Rory's bullet struck the horse which Captain Fulton rode, and the animal fell to the ground.

The young captain sprang to his feet on the instant, and drawing his sword, he called out to his men:

"Dismount, and storm the wall on foot. Don't harm the ladies on your lives!"

The troopers obeyed this command, and before Rory and his followers could load and fire again, they were crowding on the stone wall, and brandishing their sabers in opposing the long pikes of the outlaws.

The daring outlaws were outnumbered as two to one, but still they fought for their lives with desperate bravery.

While half of the troops were engaged in fighting the outlaws, the others scaled the walls and charged on the doomed men from behind.

Rory beheld this movement when it was almost too late to remedy the evil, but he made a desperate attempt to recover the advantage thus lost.

"Retreat from the wall, boys!" he cried, "and scatter over the field!"

"Surrender, you young hound!" cried Captain Fulton, as he made at Rory, with two of his men to aid him.

"There's my answer!" cried Rory, as he stretched one of the troopers with a blow of his pike.

But the next moment witnessed the defeat of the valiant young fellow, for the other trooper managed to close in on him and struck him to earth with the flat end of his saber.

"Now, you young rascal, I'll punish you for your base conduct!" cried Captain Fulton, as he stood over Rory, sword in hand. "Look your last on earth, for I am going to send you to the world below!"

A terrified scream burst from Fannie Crawford, and she was about to spring forward to shield her lover, when her brother dashed at Captain Fulton and knocked his sword aside with his own, crying:

"Would you murder a prostrate enemy, Captain Fulton? That is not the proper conduct for an English officer."

"Oh, bless you for that act, Captain Crawford!" cried Ellen. "I could bless you forever, you noble soul!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A YOUNG TYRANT IN RAGE—THE DESPERATE DUEL AT THE DAWN OF DAY—EXPOSING A COWARD—THE CRY OF JOY.

WHEN Captain Crawford sent the would-be assassin reeling back from his intended victim, young Rory, who was but slightly injured, regained his feet, and seized the saber of the trooper he had just slain.

Captain Fulton was so terribly indignant at the interference of his brother officer that he could not find words to vent his rage at the moment, but he did glare at the chivalrous young man as if he would like to send his weapon into his body.

But there was no time for recriminations on the part of the young officers, for the outlaws, far from being defeated, were fighting bravely against their foes, and they had already slain several of the troopers with their long pikes.

Turning to his sister, with whose love he sympathized, Captain Crawford, speaking in regretful tones, said:

"Fannie, I must do my duty as a soldier, but if that young man will surrender to me, I will promise——"

"I command this troop, sir," cried young Fulton, in fierce tones, "and I alone can offer terms. I order you to do your duty. When we crush those dogs you will hear from me. Here's at you, young rebel!"

"And welcome," cried Rory, as he advanced to meet the young officer with the flashing saber in his hand. "Rally, boys—rally! and we will beat them yet. Captain Crawford, I thank you for your interference."

"And I do, also, with all my heart," cried Ellen.

"Retire, ladies—retire," cried Captain Crawford. "The sword alone must decide the quarrel here."

There was a partial lull in the conflict when young Rory was stricken to the earth, and his followers, pressed by superior numbers, were about to give way; but when they saw their young chief on his feet again, waving the saber, and calling on them to rally to his side, they responded with shouts of defiance as they sprang to his side.

As Rory advanced on their leader, the troopers, as if by a common impulse, held back from attacking the outlaws, and it was evident that they were anxious to witness the combat between the two young men.

In the days of chivalry it often happened that the chiefs of opposing factions settled their quarrels by single combats in presence of their armed retainers; and it was understood that the lookers-on would not interfere in the struggle until it was decided by the death of one or other of the combatants.

At the time of which we write this spirit still existed to a great extent among those who admired personal prowess, and nothing pleased a soldier better than to see his officer engaged in a hand to hand conflict with the commanding officer on the other side.

As young Rory advanced on his foe he saw that the troopers held back, as if to give them fair play in the encounter, and he sang out to his own followers:

"Don't strike a blow, boys, unless they attack you, until this fight is decided. Captain Fulton, is this a fight to the death?"

Captain Fulton, as we have before said, was considered the best swordsman in the garrison, and he had no touch of the white feather in his composition.

Confident in his prowess, and fully believing that Rory's success in the cell was either owing to chance, or to the close limits of the fighting place, he was now assured of an easy victory.

He had two reasons, moreover, for accepting the challenge.

In the first place he would retrieve his fame as a swordsman, by slaying the only opponent at whose hands he had ever suffered defeat; and he would also carry out his father's orders, by killing one who stood in his way, without incurring any odium.

"I will kill the young hound," he thought, as Rory advanced on him; "we will slay every one of those savages, and then we will have the women in our power!"

Captain Fulton was in love with Fannie Crawford, after his own fashion, but he was not one to break his heart at a refusal of his offer.

He had never seen Ellen O'Hanlon before that morning, and he imagined, when his father proposed that he should marry the outlaw's daughter, to find her an uncouthly plain country girl.

Judge of his surprise, then, when he beheld in Ellen a splendid,

animated, beautiful creature, fit to grace any station in life, and whose voice, as she thanked Captain Crawford for his generous action toward her brother, was full of pathos and eloquence.

"It is to the death, outlaw!" cried the young swordsman, as he stood on his guard before Rory, in reply to the question: "You are to die by my hand!"

"Are you a gentleman, sir?" demanded Rory, as he paused in the attack and looked at the three women who would be helpless and forlorn if he fell.

"I am an English officer, fellow," was the insulting reply, "and I honor you by crossing swords with you."

"I've crossed swords with better gentlemen than you'll ever live to be," said Rory, as he cast a friendly glance at young Crawford. "But that is not the question now. I have a proposition to make."

"I will not hold parley with a robber outlaw," said young Fulton, stamping impatiently. "Defend yourself, for you are about to die the death of a dog!"

"We will see," was Rory's only remark, as the swords crossed.

Captain Crawford stood with his sister and the other ladies, and it was evident that he watched the contest with as much interest as those who were uttering prayers for the young outlaw's success.

Once only did he address a word to Ellen, and then it was to assure her that he would protect her with his life should Rory be slain.

"I thank you, indeed, Captain Crawford," replied the brave girl, "but I am not afraid of the issue. My father taught Rory how to fence, and I would to Heaven that the happiness and fate of us all depended on the conflict before us."

"They are well matched," remarked one of the English troopers, as he watched the opening of the combat with a critical eye, "but the Irish fellow has the advantage, with that long, heavy saber."

Young Rory heard the remark, and he drew back on the instant, saying:

"I do not care to have any advantage over you, Captain Fulton. If Captain Crawford will kindly loan me his sword, I will fight——"

"No, no, fellow!" thundered the confident swordsman, impatiently, "I will slay you if you had a saber a foot longer."

"I will have no cry that I fought you with a favored weapon," responded the young outlaw, in dignified tones, as he took Captain Crawford's sword from his hand. "If you wish to play the part of a blackguard, I will only tell you that I will punish you as one. Now, scoundrel, set on to the death; and I call on the brave soldiers behind you, in the name of honor and fair play, not to interfere."

"Fair play, fair play, it must be!" cried the soldier, who had set himself up as spokesman and critic. "We must not interfere, my lads."

"Silence there, fellow!" cried Captain Fulton, as he presented his weapon at Rory. "Now, young robber, fight your best, for I will not spare you!"

A smile of defiance was Rory's only reply, as he forced the fight by attacking his opponent furiously.

Daylight was breaking over the hills when the combatants resumed the struggle, and the spectators could perceive every feint and thrust made by them.

Though Captain Fulton was confident of success, he fought on the defensive at first, as if testing his opponent's power and skill, before making a display of his own ability.

To be sure, the skilled swordsman had an evidence of Rory's strength and courage during the conflict in the cell; but, as there was little or no opportunity on that occasion for a display of skill or cunning, the English captain was desirous of testing his powers now.

The young officer was also desirous of exhausting his opponent before he assumed the defensive, so as to make his success the more assured.

"The captain fights with caution," again remarked the irrepressible English trooper, as he saw the officer retire before the vigorous assaults of the young outlaw. "By St. George, but the Irish chap is a Tartar! See how he lunges! That's as sharp and as pretty a play as I ever looked on."

Ah, indeed, what was play to the warlike soldiers, was almost death to the poor mother, who was compelled to stand on that field in the gray dawn of the morning, and witness a deadly struggle between her only son and an enemy who was bent on taking his life.

Young Rory was an impetuous fighter, and he was anxious to bring the struggle to a close, as he feared the arrival of a stronger force

from the garrison, but yet he was not mad enough to close his eyes to the fact that his opponent was playing a cautious game, and that his purpose was to weaken him before assuming the aggressive.

"He's the best swordsman I ever met," thought Rory, as his opponent parried a skillful and vigorous thrust. "I must take it easy awhile, and see what he'll do."

A fiendish smile passed over Captain Fulton's face, as he saw that Rory paused as if worn out with the attack, and he said, in tones of irony:

"And so the bold boaster of the hills is exhausted already. Prepare for death, hound, for I will play on your body now."

The expert swordsman did not play on Rory's body, but there was thrilling music in the clashing of the swords, as he set on, with all the skill and vigor that he was master of.

And Rory, with a smile on his handsome, manly face, met the attack with a courage and skill that called forth the applause of friends and foes.

"Oh! isn't he a splendid swordsman?" cried Fannie Crawford, who had lost all fear for her lover's safety, in admiration of his prowess.

"I thought Fulton was the crack sword in the province, Fannie," responded her brother; "but by St. George, he has met his match this time. If he fails in his last coup—and he never failed before—he is a dead man. The young man will tire him out, and pink him."

And Captain Fulton, growing more heated as he found that all his skillful thrusts were parried by Rory, was bracing himself for his final effort.

Assuming an erect attitude, and holding his weapon aloft as if inviting his opponent to make a thrust at his breast, the cunning duelist cried out, in a mocking tone:

"Here's an opening, you young robber. See if you can touch me."

Rory saw by the cunning gleam of the man's eye that some trick was intended, but he was not one to decline a challenge thus offered.

Bracing himself on the instant, he made a desperate lunge, and sent his weapon home in the breast of his antagonist.

A cry of triumph burst from Captain Fulton on the moment; and, quick as a flash, his weapon descended.

But, as quick as he was, Rory was not caught by the trick.

Though the cunning duelist's sword descended with lightning-like rapidity, Rory was equally as active, as he sprang back ere the other could cut him on the wrist, as was intended.

And then, before Captain Fulton could recover his guard, he received a blow on the face with the edge of Rory's sword, and he fell to the ground, with the blood flowing from a broad gash across the cheek.

Planting his foot on the fallen duelist's breast, and holding his sword to his throat, young Rory cried:

"Now, you treacherous scoundrel, you are at my mercy."

"Slay the dog, soldiers!" yelled Captain Fulton to his men.

"Listen, soldiers," cried Rory; "and you, Captain Crawford. Have I not conquered him in fair fight?"

"You have, sir; but you will not slay a fallen enemy," replied Captain Crawford, as he advanced as if to protect his brother officer.

"I would not slay a dog that was at my mercy," replied Rory, "and this man is not much better. I brand him as a coward and a knave, and I have made my mark on him for life—see!"

Rory bent down, and tore open the duelist's coat and shirt, and displayed the glittering breast-plate beneath.

The soldiers looked at the cowardly protection for a moment, and then turned away, muttering words of disgust; for, while it was the custom at the time to wear breastplates exposed, it was deemed cowardly to engage in a duel with one who was not defended in the same way.

"I crave a truce, young sir," said Crawford, as a groan of pain and mortification burst from the wounded man.

"Hurrah—hurrah, boys, for young Rory of the Hills," cried one of the outlaws.

"And for old Rory of the Hills, in the bargain," cried another, as he capered around the field with joy, "for here he comes to help us."

"Heaven be praised!" gasped the outlaw's wife, as she knelt on the green sod. "We are saved, Ellen. My brave boy, you are a true son of your father."

CHAPTER XX.

FANNIE TAKES SIDES—THE SUDDEN ONSLAUGHT—THE ABDUCTION—YOUNG RORY IN DISTRESS—THE COMPACT BETWEEN BROTHER AND SISTER.

YOUNG RORY had his sword still at the throat of his prostrate foe, when a wild shout announced the near approach of welcome assistance.

His faithful followers had formed into line behind him, while he was engaged with Captain Fulton; and they were now eager to rush on the troopers and keep them from retreating, before the succoring body arrived on the scene.

"Let us at them, Rory!" cried a stalwart mountaineer, as he flourished his pike above his head. "Finish that treacherous dog, and let us at them!"

Captain Crawford, who had also placed himself at the head of the troopers, interposed on the instant, crying:

"Young man, you will not dishonor yourself by slaying a fallen foe. Release him on the instant, or I will assault you!"

"I scorn to take the wretch's life!" cried young Rory, as he spurned the prostrate man with his foot, and then sprang back to lead his followers. "But I have no quarrel with you, Captain Crawford, except that you are my common enemy. Let us retire with the ladies here, and we will not molest you."

"My sister must return with me, sir!" cried Captain Crawford. "Come, Fannie."

As the young man spoke, he advanced with outstretched hands, as if to seize his sister.

Young Rory rushed between them with uplifted sword, crying:

"That young lady chooses to come with me, Captain Crawford, and I will defend her with my life."

"Is that true, sister?" demanded Captain Crawford, in dejected tones.

"It is, brother," was Fannie's reply. "I am pledged to this young man. Henceforth his fortunes will be mine."

In the meantime, Captain Fulton had arisen from the ground, and was binding a handkerchief around his bleeding face, while he addressed the troopers around him, urging them to prompt action.

Captain Crawford hesitated a moment on receiving his sister's reply, and he then cast his eyes across the fields towards the advancing outlaws, who were then within a quarter of a mile of them, as if arguing with himself as to the chances of overpowering the outlaws before him, and bearing his sister away before the outlaws could succor them.

"I cannot permit this, sister," he cried, as he turned to lead his men; "father would never forgive me."

"Charge on the scoundrels, charge!" yelled Captain Fulton, who had recovered his sword on arising. "Down with the dogs, and bear off the girls. A hundred pounds to the man who secures the outlaw's daughter!"

Sending forth thrilling war cries, the English troopers dashed at the outlaws in a body, and before the latter were prepared to resist the unexpected onslaught.

Rory attempted to stay the rushing tide, but he was set on by three stout troopers and borne to the earth, while his followers, fighting as bravely as they could, were forced back pell-mell.

Fannie Crawford endeavored to retreat with the outlaws, but her brother seized her around the waist and lifted her over the stone wall as he cried, addressing one of the troopers, who was engaged in holding the horses on the other side:

"Dickson, place this young lady on a horse, and ride to the garrison with her. Hurry, on your life!"

Fannie struggled with all her strength to free herself from the stalwart trooper's grasp, but it was of no avail, as the man forced her upon his horse, and then, springing up beside her, he rode away.

Captain Crawford then turned to look for the outlaw's wife and daughter, when a cry of anguish fell on his ear, and he saw Ellen O'Hanlon struggling in the arms of a big trooper, who was lifting her over the stone wall.

"Release that girl, you scoundrel!" cried Captain Crawford, as he sprang at the rude fellow; "release her, or——"

"She is my prisoner, Captain Crawford," cried Fulton, as he received the young girl in his arms on the other side of the wall, and bore her toward his charger. "Sound the retreat, corporal. The rebels are on us."

"Villain—coward!" cried Captain Crawford, as he sprang over the wall. "Stand and release that young lady."

A fiendish laugh burst from Captain Fulton as he placed the struggling girl on his charger and then sprang up behind her, crying:

"I have my prize, Captain Crawford. I'll settle with you on the morrow."

"By Heaven, but you'll settle with your life!" yelled Fannie's brother, as he rushed at the horseman with uplifted sword.

Captain Fulton clapped the spurs to his horse's sides, and the gallant animal bounded away at a mad pace, leaving the exasperated rival foaming with rage.

"Retreat, Captain Crawford, retreat!" yelled one of the troopers, as he mounted his horse in hot haste. "The outlaws are on us in great force."

The young man was so stupefied at the outrage committed by his brother officer, that he was incapable of action for some moments after the wretch rode off.

Collecting himself, however, and remembering the whispered conversation he had overheard between General Fulton and his son, he rushed to act on the instant, and rescue Ellen at all hazards.

Dashing toward his horse, he was about to spring on his back, when Rory of the Hills, followed by fifty of his followers, rushed over the stone wall.

"Surrender, you young dog," cried the old outlaw, as he presented his gun at the young officer. "Surrender you must, for I will hold one hostage for my daughter."

"For Heaven's sake, sir," cried Captain Crawford, in appealing tones, "don't stay me now, or your daughter will be lost to you forever! 'Tis to save her from a vile wretch that I am now in haste."

"What mean you, sir?" demanded the old outlaw chief, impressed by the earnest words and manner of the young officer.

"I must tell you, sir, that your daughter will be the victim of a vile conspiracy if I am not allowed to fly to her rescue at once. General Fulton, for reasons that you know full well, has commissioned his son to capture her. She will be the young scoundrel's wife, by force or by guile, before the day is past, if I am not present to baffle them. Oh, on my life, I do not plead for myself, but for your fair daughter. Let me ride away, sir, as you value your daughter's life and happiness."

"The young man speaks the truth, I am sure, father," said young Rory, who appeared on the stone wall, with the blood flowing from a wound on his forehead. "I am certain he is an honorable gentleman."

"Then ride away, Captain Crawford," cried the old outlaw chief. "Save my child from the wretch, and you will have my blessing, enemy though you are."

"I'll save her if I have to kill the villain who aspires to her hand," cried Captain Crawford, saluting Rory and his son.

"That's a gallant young gentleman," remarked Rory of the Hills, as the young officer rode away. "Oh, what a pity we were not a few minutes sooner, my son. They have all rode off—the cowards!"

"'Tis a pity, father," said Rory, in despondent tones, as he thought of Fannie Crawford.

"Is that a severe cut, my son?" inquired the anxious father, as he proceeded to examine the wound on young Rory's forehead.

"Not at all, father. 'Twill be nothing after 'tis dressed. What will we do now?"

"We must get up to the mountain, with your mother, as fast as possible. We will take the horses of the troopers you have slain. General Fulton is out with a great force, but we can give him the slip, I'll warrant you."

"But we won't leave Ellen in the hands of that scoundrel, sir?" remonstrated the young fellow, who was thinking of Fannie at the same time.

"What can we do now, my son?" replied the old outlaw, in dejected tones. "You are not able to bear any more fatigue, for this wound needs attention. Poor Ellen must remain a prisoner for a few days, until I get an opportunity to release her. If we manage to save ourselves now, we will be most fortunate, indeed."

"You are right, father," responded the young man, with a sigh. "We will have to trust to Captain Crawford."

And the outlaws were compelled to retreat to one of their hiding places in the mountain, while Captain Fulton, bearing the loved daughter, was riding toward the garrison.

CHAPTER XXI.

SUSPENSE AND DEFIANCE—FANNIE IN DISGUISE AGAIN—AN EXPEDITION AT NIGHT—THE TRAIL OF THE CONSPIRATOR.

THREE days passed away, and during that time Fannie Crawford was in agonies of fear and suspense, for young Rory was confined in the garrison under strict guard; and it was announced by General Fulton, that if he should survive his wounds, he must suffer death on the scaffold.

Poor Fannie made several attempts to see her lover, and she even appealed to her indulgent father, but all in vain.

Her brother was also in a distracted state of mind, as he could find no trace of his lost Ellen. Captain Fulton did not make his appearance at the barracks.

It was rumored that the missing officer was lying on a bed of sickness, brought on by the wounds he had received at young Rory's hands; and it was whispered that he had borne the young girl away to Scotland in order to force her to marry him.

General Fulton and Lord Crawford, at the heads of large bodies of troops, had been scouring the mountains for three days, but they did not succeed in crushing the outlaws, and for the very good reason that the wary mountaineers did not appear to show fight to such overwhelming numbers.

Indeed, so inactive and mysterious did Rory of the Hills appear, that it was currently reported and believed that he had left the country with his followers for the purpose of joining the French army, as he had often expressed his desire of doing.

Fannie and her brother had formed fifty plans for the discovery of Ellen and the rescue of young Rory, but they were rejected as fast as they were formed.

It was necessary to find Ellen's whereabouts before they could do anything.

And it was impossible to render any assistance to young Rory until he was strong enough to act with them.

Besides, General Fulton was keeping a strict watch on the movements of the brother and sister.

It was evident that the wily man suspected them of sympathizing with the prisoner, and it was plain to be seen that he had received news from his son as to the manner in which Captain Crawford had acted in rescuing Rory from death when the cruel wretch held his sword at his throat.

Fearless as he was of General Fulton's anger, while engaged in such a cause, Captain Crawford was untiring in his efforts to discover Ellen's whereabouts, or to learn where his rival was stopping.

Every day, when not on duty, he rode out through the country to make inquiries about the missing couple, and every night he was compelled to report to his sister that his labors were all in vain.

Exasperated beyond all endurance, he was at last bold enough to demand of General Fulton the whereabouts of his son.

"My son, sir," was the stern reply, "is seeking to heal the wounds received while performing his duty—wounds which he would not have received had you not interfered to save the life of a young wretch who will soon perish on the scaffold."

"I respectfully deny, general," replied the young man, "that I did aught unbecoming a soldier and a gentleman. Will you please inform me, sir, what he did with the young lady he bore away with him three days ago?"

A cynical smile passed over the cunning old warrior's face, as he replied, in sneering tones:

"You seem very much interested in the outlaw's family, Captain Crawford. I refuse to answer any questions about that person; and, what is more, I warn you that, if you are not more attentive to your duties as an officer and not meddle with my prisoners, a court-martial will be summoned."

The young officer's face was flushed with indignation and anger, and, drawing his sword, he flung it on the table before his superior officer, crying:

"I resign my commission on the instant, sir, for I will not serve another hour under a general who encourages his son to conspire against the happiness and fortune of a helpless maiden. If I have to hunt through every hole and corner of the land, I will find your son. And woe be to him if he injures Miss O'Hanlon in any way."

And the young man burst out of the door before the indignant general could say a word in reply or order him to remain.

While the angry commander was venting his rage in words that

Captain Crawford rode on after the retreating troopers, his heart beating with love for Ellen O'Hanlon, and with rage and indignation against his fellow officer.

When the young man rode into the barracks, he inquired for Captain Fulton, but none of the soldiers could give him any information, and it was asserted that he had not returned to the quarters since he had rallied out on the previous night.

"I see how it is," muttered the enraged lover, as he pondered for a few moments. "The scoundrel has taken her away to some hiding place, fearing my anger, until he can compel her to wed him. I must consult with Fannie."

The young officer found his sister a prisoner in her room, with a guard outside the door and at the window, and he found the spirited girl in a temper that was not agreeable to his purpose.

"How is this, brother?" she demanded, as the young officer entered the apartment. "Is it by your orders that I find myself treated in a way that you would not treat Ellen O'Hanlon?"

"My dear sister, you must forgive me for my action. You surely would regret allowing yourself to be led away by that young outlaw."

"And you won't regret being led away by his sister at all," sneered the indignant Fannie, as she cast a withering glance at her brother.

"Let us be friends, Fannie," returned the young man, with a sigh, "and we can aid one another in this matter. I do confess to you that I love Ellen O'Hanlon."

"Then why should I be ashamed to own my love for her brother, and go with him, if I so please?" demanded Fannie. "I am certain that I will never regret being his wife."

"I will not object, dear Fannie, if father consents, but in his absence, 'tis my duty to protect you."

"I don't need your protection, sir," cried the indignant young girl, as she burst into tears, "and to see the brave fellow struck down before me! I know he is dead!"

"He is not dead, Fannie, I assure you. I saw him before I left the place of the encounter, and he was able to walk about. He received only a slight wound on the forehead. Aha—what is that I hear? The troops are returning. They are bringing prisoners with them, too. They must have beaten the outlaws."

The young man sprang to the window looking out on the road as he spoke, and his sister followed him.

"Oh, gracious Heaven!" cried Fannie, as she pointed to a well-known form who was held on a horse by two troopers, "there he is now, and a prisoner! Look at his bleeding face! Oh, my poor darling—they will murder him!"

'Twas too true, indeed.

Rory of the Hills, while escorting his wife and wounded son to the mountain, was set on by a strong force of cavalry.

The brave outlaw fought with all the desperation of a father and husband, to bear off the loved ones, but he could not rescue his son, who was unable to keep on his horse, so enfeebled was he by the trying ordeals of the night and morning, as well as by the wounds he had received.

Young Rory was captured and dragged back to the garrison, while the old outlaw, by desperate fighting, succeeded in cutting his way through the horsemen, bearing his wife with him.

"Have courage, Fannie, have courage!" said the weeping girl's brother, as he drew her away from the window. "He is alive, and we are here to befriend him again. His sister is in the power of that wretch, Fulton. You promise to aid me in rescuing her, and I will pledge you, on my honor, to let your lover free."

"I will, brother, I will!" replied Fannie, as she grasped the young man's hand. "What can I do?"

"You can do much, Fannie, for you are a spirited, brave girl. Captain Fulton will go to any extremes to force Ellen to become his wife. Let us plot together, with the purpose of defeating him—and also to rescue young Rory. Is it a compact, Fannie?"

"It is—it is—with all my heart and soul!" replied the enthusiastic creature. "Command me as you will, brother."

"Then we will rest a few hours, sister, and then to work. In the meantime, I will see that young Rory's wounds are dressed, and I will set spies to hunt out where Fulton has taken Ellen. Courage, sister, courage, and we will be successful."

were strong and expressive, Captain Crawford mounted his horse and rode out of the barrack, fearing that General Fulton would place him under arrest for his violent language.

When General Fulton saw the young man riding away, he jumped to his feet, exclaiming:

"That young miscreant is in love with the girl himself! By all that's powerful, but I'll compel the girl to marry my son this very night!"

Summoning an orderly, he gave some hurried orders, and then prepared himself for a journey, as he kept muttering:

"I'll force her to marry him, the stubborn wench, or I'll hang her brother before her eyes. I'll hang the young wretch anyway."

Fannie Crawford, by dint of bribery and perseverance, had just succeeded in getting herself placed as sentinel at the cell door where her lover was confined.

It was late in the evening, and the faithful girl was waiting until full darkness set in, so that she could let her lover know that she was prepared to rescue him.

Fannie was dressed as a soldier, and she had on two full suits of uniform—one of which she intended for Rory, so that he could pass out unchallenged, while she remained until relieved by the guard.

Rory was fast recovering from his wounds, but he was very despondent, as he had not heard a friendly voice for three days, and he was well aware that General Fulton intended to put him to death.

Just as Fannie was about to inform the prisoner inside of her presence, a sergeant entered the passage in haste, followed by half a dozen troopers, saying:

"You are relieved, comrade. We have General Fulton's orders to remove the prisoner."

Poor Fannie was terrified for the moment, but she recovered her courage without betraying any emotion and withdrew to catch the movements of the troopers.

While thus engaged she saw them drag her lover from the cell and lead him out into the courtyard, where General Fulton with a small body of troopers was in waiting.

Five minutes afterward Fannie was riding along the road after her lover, and she still wore the uniform of a soldier, with a sword at her side and a pair of pistols in her belt.

As the devoted girl rode along in the darkening twilight she kept the troops ahead in sight, and she saw that their way led toward the pass at the Glen of the Rocks, where she had first encountered her lover.

Fannie was in complete ignorance either as to their destination, or as to the object of the cruel general in dragging her lover from his cell and forcing him on the journey.

"Oh, if I had only his father and twenty of his followers," said Fannie aloud, "we could rescue the brave, noble fellow."

The words were scarcely spoken, when a man sprang out on the road, seized the bridle of the horse, and presented a pistol at her, crying:

"Surrender, soldier, or you are a dead man!"

"Dear me!" cried Fannie, as she clutched her hands together and bent toward the man, "I am so glad I met you! You are Rory's father?"

"I am called Rory of the Hills, and no mistake, soldier," replied the outlaw. "Folks who wear your coat are not generally pleased to meet me."

"But I am, sir—I am!" cried Fannie. "I know you as Count Edmund O'Hanlon."

"And who are you?" demanded the outlaw, as he peered into the girl's face. "Where are you riding to at night, and alone?"

Fannie burst out into a merry laugh, as she replied:

"I am a young lady in disguise, sir, and I am riding after your son."

"Why, on my life, but 'tis Miss Fannie Crawford!" exclaimed the outlaw. "What say you of my son, young lady?"

"I say that he is a prisoner of the party of troopers who are now riding ahead of me, and that he was taken from his cell by General Fulton for some evil design."

"The party ahead!" cried the outlaw, as he stared after the troop. "Oh, great Heaven, am I here alone? Push on with me, my dear young lady. I was going to the garrison even now to see if I could not effect my son's rescue by stratagem, as the troops are too strong for

my people. Push on—ride on, and I will keep up with you. We must find out where they are going."

"And I will accompany you!" cried a voice from behind the hedge.

And out rode Fannie's brother from behind the hedge, where he had been lying in concealment, fancying the passing troop were in pursuit of him.

The outlaw consulted with brother and sister for some minutes, as he ran along beside the horses, while they still kept the troop in sight, and a plan of action was arranged between them.

"I will be at the Glen of the Rocks in an hour, captain," said Rory of the Hills, as he was about to turn up the mountain, "and I will remain there with my men until I hear from you. Follow them as a bloodhound on the trail and find out their destination. Mark my words, they are taking Rory where they have my daughter in hiding."

"And you will pledge me your word that there will be no useless bloodshed, Count O'Hanlon?" inquired the young officer.

"If it can be avoided, I will not raise my hand, sir," replied the outlaw, "though General Fulton and his son deserve death at my hands."

"I will settle with the son," responded the young officer. "And now we'll away."

Fannie and her brother rode on after the troop in silence, for each was engrossed in their own thoughts.

They felt that stirring events would ensue from their action that night, and they were not mistaken in their forebodings, as their future lives—their prosperity and their happiness—depended on the course of events to be shaped on that night.

CHAPTER XXII.

ELLEN'S HIDING PLACE—AN UNEXPECTED VISIT—THE FEARFUL PROPOSITION—AN INTERRUPTION IN FORCE—THE LAST DUEL.

WHEN Captain Fulton rode away in hot haste from the scene of the struggle at the stone wall, he intended to push right on to the garrison town with his captive.

The man was sorely wounded in the left arm, and the blood was still flowing from the slash on the cheek, but he did not seem to mind pain, or the weakness that was overcoming him, as he clasped Ellen to his breast, and spurred the fiery charger to a furious pace.

At first the abductor thought of taking the fair girl to the barracks; but he remembered that Captain Crawford could call him to account there, and perhaps block his rascally designs at once.

"'Twill never do," muttered the villain, as he wheeled his horse into a side road and urged him on the faster, "to take her there. I will off with her to the mansion. I can keep her there until I force her to be my wife. She is a charming creature, by George—far more winsome than Fannie Crawford!"

As Ellen was borne away, she gave vent to piercing cries; and she pleaded fervently with her captor; but she soon saw that her pleadings were all in vain.

And then, summoning all her native courage, she resolved to face the peril with a brave heart and a defiant air.

"Cheer up—cheer up, my sweet creature," whispered the villain into her ear. "I swear to you that I intend you no harm. Tomorrow, or as soon as I can summon a clergyman, you will be my happy bride."

"Never—you wretch!" cried the undaunted girl. "I will die first!"

"Oh, you but wait until I get you to the mansion, and you will see, my pretty one! I love you to distraction already."

"And I hate you as I would a serpent!" cried Ellen, as she struggled to free herself from the ruffian's grasp.

"You'll soon change that tune, fair one," said her tormentor, with a merry laugh. "Ugh! how this arm pains me. Faster and faster, good horse, or I will faint on the way."

The gallant horse did bound forward with renewed vigor; and in less than an hour, the captain and his captive rode into a shaded

avenue leading up to the mansion that was formerly owned by Ellen's grandfather—her mother's father.

The house was a very strong and commodious building, well adapted to stand a siege, or for use as a prison, and it was situated in a lonesome spot, surrounded by dense woods.

The place was in charge of an old soldier and his wife at the time; and they received their master's son and heir with all due respect and humility.

"Take charge of this young lady, Mrs. Martin," commanded the captain, as the soldier lifted the young girl from the horse, "and take her up to the strong room. Secure her there, and tend her kindly, as you value my favor, but do not let her escape. Martin, I want you to come and dress a few slight wounds."

Ellen saw no chance of escape, and she submitted with as good grace as possible, but fully determined to avail herself of the first opportunity presented.

A day passed away in her prison room, and Ellen was kindly treated by the soldier's wife, but she saw nothing of the man who had made her prisoner.

On the second day of her imprisonment, Ellen was informed by the woman that Captain Fulton was suffering from his wounds, but that he was fast recovering.

Three days passed away, and night was on them, when Ellen heard a clattering of hoofs in the yard below, followed by a tramping of feet in the great hall.

"Can it be possible," muttered the distressed girl, "that my father has found my hiding place? Oh, Heaven send it!"

Ellen waited in great suspense for some time, hoping and praying that a rescue was at hand; but she was doomed to bitter disappointment.

While thus waiting, she heard heavy footfalls on the stairs, her prison door was opened, and General Fulton and his son stood before her.

The former wore a fierce look on his stern face; while the latter was pale and haggard, as if suffering from recent bodily pain.

"I came to speak to you on very important business, Miss O'Hanlon," commenced the stern general, in abrupt tones, as he advanced towards the young girl; "you know this is my son?"

"I do, sir," replied Ellen, bitterly. "I cannot easily forget him."

"Are you prepared to marry him on the instant, young lady?" inquired the general.

"Marry him! Marry that wretch!" cried Ellen. "As I told himself, I would prefer death."

"Don't insist on it at present, father," remonstrated Captain Fulton. "Give me a little time, and I'll win her."

"But I do insist on it, and on the instant," cried General Fulton, as he stamped his foot with impatience. "I tell you, sir, we have no time to lose."

Then, turning to Ellen, the stern warrior regarded her for a moment with his piercing gray eyes, ere he said:

"You have an only brother?"

"I have, sir. Oh, would to Heaven he could know where I am, and I'm sure he'd release me from this prison, if mortal being could do it."

"He does know where you are, young lady," replied the general, "but he is powerless to release you—as you call it—for he is a prisoner himself, and he will be hung before your eyes, unless you consent to marry my son on the instant."

"Oh, sir," cried the young girl, "you are not in earnest? You are only speaking in jest, I'm sure. You, a general and a gentleman, would not compel a poor girl to wed one she hates?"

The old general seized Ellen's arm and dragged her to the door, as he replied:

"Love or hate, you wed him on the instant, or your brother dies before your eyes. This way, girl. Follow us, Captain Fulton, and I'll soon bring her to her senses. Come on, girl."

And the stern man dragged the young girl down the broad stairs to the hall, and from thence into a large apartment in front of the house, where a party of troopers had assembled.

"Bring the prisoner in," yelled General Fulton, as he still held Ellen by the arm.

The poor girl trembled with apprehension, as two of the troopers hastened to do his bidding, and a fearful mental struggle took place in her mind.

"Now see him, girl," cried the cruel old general, as two of the troopers led young Rory into the apartment. "Look, and behold that he is already prepared for the death in store for him."

The poor girl did look, and she beheld her brave brother, all pale and ghastly from his wounds, standing in the room before her, his arms pinioned behind him, and a rope around his neck.

"Oh, Rory—Rory," cried Ellen, "this is terrible, indeed! My dear brother, what must I do to save you?"

"Marry my son, girl," hissed the stern old wretch into her ears. "Marry my son, and he is free to go to France or to old Nick—refuse, and he will perish like a dog before your eyes."

"Do not heed him, Ellen," cried brave young Rory. "I would sooner suffer a thousand deaths than see you the wife of that base scoundrel."

"Your answer, girl?" cried the old general, as he cast a savage glance at the defiant young man.

"I—I—I—can't bear to think of wedding your son, sir," stammered the distressed girl. "Oh, is there no other way of saving my poor brother?"

"No other way," replied the cruel man. "There's a clergyman here, ready to unite you, and there stands my son. If you do not consent in two seconds, your brother's body will dangle from that hook? Fling on the rope, corporal, and stand ready to pull the young hound up when I command. Reverend sir, will you step forward?"

A sanctimonious-looking old wretch, who was dressed in the garb of a minister, advanced toward him from the group of troopers, and said, in cringing tones:

"The young lady will surely save the life of a fellow being, for 'tis so commanded, and be this worthy gentleman's fair bride?"

"Don't marry the scoundrel on your life, Ellen," cried young Rory, as he stood under the strong hook projecting from the wall, with the rope from his neck suspended above him. "I would sooner die a thousand deaths, I tell you, dear sister."

"Will you wed my son, or will you see your brother die before your eyes?" again demanded General Fulton, as he glared at the trembling girl. "Tighten that rope, corporal, and three of you be prepared to hoist him into eternity when I give the word. Your final answer, girl?"

"Oh, Rory, dear Rory, I cannot see you die before me!" cried Ellen, as she clasped her hands in anguish. "I must wed the wretch, Rory, if I should die after."

"On your life, Ellen, don't do it," cried Rory, though he felt the rope tightening around his throat.

"Clap a gag on that young fool's mouth, corporal," cried General Fulton. "Advance, my son, and take your bride's hand. On with the ceremony, reverend sir."

"I protest against this outrage," cried an indignant voice, as Captain Crawford, sword in hand, burst into the apartment from the front window, and dragged Ellen away from her tormentors. "General Fulton, I will denounce you before the world, as a villain and a wretch!"

"Ha, young sir! dare you lift your sword to me?" cried the stern general, who was startled for a moment at the sudden appearance of the man he dreaded seeing at this moment. "Know you that you merit death for such an offense?"

"I defy your authority, General Fulton, for I am no longer a soldier," cried Captain Crawford, as he stood in front of Ellen as if to shield her from her foes; "and I will defend this young lady to the death!"

"Disarm and seize the fool, soldiers!" cried the angry general, who was now beside himself at the unlooked for interruption. "Cut him down if he resists!"

Half a dozen soldiers sprang on the young man with their swords, and the old sergeant who commanded the party, knowing the chivalrous youth since he was a boy, cried out:

"'Tis useless to resist, Captain Crawford, for we must do our duty. Surrender, and we will not harm you."

"Never!" cried the brave young man, as he brandished his sword at the advancing troopers, and endeavored to retreat toward the window, pushing Ellen behind him. "Slip out of the window and escape on my horse, while I keep them back."

"This must not be," sobbed Ellen, as she faltered in the movement.

"Cut the wretch down, sergeant!" yelled the excited general, as he

observed the young man's object, while he sprang forward to seize the young girl.

Captain Crawford aimed a desperate blow at his late commanding officer, but the old sergeant interposed with his weapon; the soldiers pressed on him and struck the sword from his hand, and the next moment Ellen's defender was a prisoner, and at the mercy of a man who never forgave an insult.

"Secure the scoundrel, and go on with the ceremony!" cried General Fulton, as he dragged Ellen back to the middle of the great room. "And now, young lady, hesitate a moment, and you will witness a double execution, I vow. Ha, ha! and so Captain Crawford is interested in the outlaw's daughter, indeed! Know you, sir, that you have merited death at my hands, and death you will suffer!"

"Oh, mercy—mercy!" cried Ellen. "Spare his life, spare my brother's life, sir, and I will wed your son on the instant."

"Be it so, then," replied the cruel general, as he turned to the minister. "On with the ceremony."

And then, as a mischievous smile passed over his stern face, he muttered:

"They will both die to-night!"

"I protest against this vile outrage!" cried Captain Crawford, as he saw the hand of the girl he loved in that of his hated rival, while the clergyman commenced muttering the marriage ceremony.

"And so do I!" cried a voice that thrilled to the heart of everyone in the apartment.

And the next instant Rory of the Hills, with a sword flashing in his strong right hand, and a pistol in the other, burst in among them.

"To arms—to arms!" cried General Fulton, as he heard the tramp of armed men in the hall outside. "We are beset."

Rory of the Hills cast one glance around the apartment when he entered, and then with a bound he flung the clergyman and Captain Fulton aside, drew Ellen back, and then made a rush at the corporal, who was holding the rope suspended around Rory's neck.

With one sweep of his weapon, the strong man cut the rope in twain, as he cried:

"Some one will suffer for this to-night, my brave boy."

And then, before the soldiers could interfere, he cut the cords that bound his son's arms and tore the gag from his mouth.

In the meantime about thirty of Rory's followers had rushed into the room after him, while the soldiers were forming at the other end of the apartment, and preparing, under their general's orders, for a desperate struggle.

Captain Crawford was still held as a prisoner, but his eyes were beaming with joy as he saw that Ellen was now under her father's protection.

"Set on the hounds, soldiers!" cried General Fulton, who saw at a glance that the outlaws did not outnumber his own party very much. "Set on!"

"Halt, there, General Fulton!" cried Rory of the Hills, in tones that commanded the attention of all, and caused the soldiers to hesitate in the proposed onslaught.

"Are you about to surrender, outlaw?" demanded General Fulton.

"Surrender?" replied Rory of the Hills, with a merry smile, as he cast a sidelong glance at his hardy followers. "Yes, I will surrender—we'll all surrender—on one condition."

"What is that?" demanded General Fulton.

"We are old enemies, General Fulton," replied the outlaw, "and you are counted a brave man and cunning at fence. You have attempted to do me a great wrong, by trying to force my girl into a marriage with that reprobate son of yours. You will answer for that insult with your sword."

"And ready I am to do it, outlaw," cried the brave general, as he advanced a few steps to the encounter.

"Hold on a moment, sir!" again cried Rory of the Hills. "It would be a foolish waste of life to embroil the brave men behind you in this quarrel now, and I don't want to sacrifice any more of my followers in this way. Let you and I decide the matter with our swords."

"I am quite willing, sir," cried General Fulton, who was still in the vigor of manhood, and prided himself on his skill in the use of his weapon. "Let us set on!"

"Not until we come to an agreement, General Fulton," said the outlaw chief. "I have made definite arrangements to sail for France in a few days, taking my family and followers with me. If you conquer me in this encounter, I pledge you that the men here present, with my son and daughter, will surrender to you quietly, for that is my command."

"They will be my prisoners very soon, then!" cried General Fulton, as he advanced a step or so nearer, "for I will slay you on the spot!"

"One moment more," cried the outlaw, as he advanced also. "If I conquer you, do you command your men to deliver your son to me as a hostage? Do you pledge your word of honor that you will surrender to me their arms and horses?"

"I accept your proposal, sir," replied the general, confident in his own skill as a swordsman. "Come on."

"I must share in this quarrel," cried young Rory, as he picked up the sword which Captain Crawford had dropped when overpowered by the soldiers. "I challenge Captain Fulton to answer me with his life for the insult he has offered to my sister."

"My son accepts, sir," cried General Fulton, who had great faith in his pet's skill, not having heard of his defeat by Rory three days before. "Come, my son, and let us punish the scoundrels as they deserve."

Captain Fulton had no relish for the work thus presented, but he could not refuse without incurring disgrace.

"I accept the young outlaw's proposition," he cried, as he advanced to his father's side, sword in hand.

"I trust that you do not yet wear that armor of steel beneath your shirt, sir," said young Rory, with a roguish smile.

The young man opened his coat and shirt on the instant, as he cried:

"I never wore that, save in battle, you hound! and now I will avenge my former defeat on you. At them, father!"

"Strike home, Rory, my brave son!" cried the old outlaw, "and then for France and glory."

And the next moment the four swords were clashing in the great apartment, while the soldiers and outlaws looked on with almost breathless interest.

At the door of the room stood Fannie Crawford, still dressed as a soldier, watching the fray with a beating heart, though she was hopeful of her lover's success.

The double duel was short and decisive, as Rory of the Hills beat down the weapon of his opponent with an irresistible blow, and then sent his sword into the breast of the doomed general.

Young Rory fought fast and furious, also, while his antagonist, feeling that he could not expect any mercy, displayed all his skill in the desperate encounter.

But it was all in vain.

As General Fulton lay stretched on the floor he saw the weapon of the young outlaw piercing his son's heart, and he heard his death-groan in the room where he had intended to celebrate his marriage.

And then such a cheer as arose from the outlaws, as young Rory sprang to embrace Fannie Crawford, while the soldiers hastened to assist their general.

Five minutes after, the outlaws rode away from the mountains, bearing the arms and horses of the soldiers with them.

A week later, and a schooner sailed from the Irish coast with the outlaw and his family and his followers; and on the deck, hand in hand, stood young Rory and his fair bride Fannie.

Ellen O'Hanlon could never forget the gallant young man who had espoused her cause, but she would not desert her parents.

While the brave outlaw and his gallant son are bidding adieu to their native land, we will take our farewell of them for the present, in the hope that we may meet them again on the great battle fields of Europe, where the armies of France, with the world-renowned Irish Brigade, are fighting the hereditary enemies of Ireland.

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